

EDMUND EVANS

"Grandma, I'll never be naughty. Never."

M. ELLEN EDWARDS

THE ARGOSY.

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DENE HOLLOW.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIV.

ONLY SADNESS.

THIS chapter will be a sad one. I am sorry, but there's no help for it. The reader will say, attributing the story to the imagination of the writer's brain, Why make these people, in whom we have got interested, die? The answer is, Because they *did* die. For it is not a tale of fiction, but a real record of the past: of people that lived, and of the events that happened to them. When an author is trammelled by reality, and would be a faithful narrator, he cannot put sunshine where darkness lay, or make dark that which was light.

Some months have elapsed since the death of Robert Owen, and they have brought at least one grave and grievous misfortune in their train. Geoffry Clanwaring, out one day with a party shooting small birds, had received a gun-shot wound in his side. There was little damage outwardly; and, of that, he soon recovered: but the doctors had a suspicion of some grave inward injury: and if their fear proved correct, poor Geoffry would not be long for this world. His father, Sir Dene, did not know of this fear—indeed it was confined pretty much to Mr. Priar, and the other surgeon—a skilled man from Worcester—who had attended him in the accident. Not being absolutely sure themselves, they did not talk of it. The relations between Sir Dene and Geoffry remained the same: cordial, but not intimate: and Geoffry and his wife had not been admitted as guests within the gates of Beechhurst Dene.

No new light had been thrown upon the death of Robert Owen. The singular report—that his ghost might be sometimes seen in and about Harebell Lane—did not subside. While some scouted it as

utterly absurd, and old Squire Arde laughed over it till his eyes ran tears, the greater portion of the community lent ear to the story. Gander—as was before related—had been frightened nearly out of his senses by the sight. He was not the only one: and Harebell Lane was more than ever shunned at night. Mrs. Owen remained at Harebell Farm, her son William managing it in his late father's place.

There were great doings at Beechhurst Dene the first fortnight in September. John Clanwaring, the heir, brought down his newly-married wife on a visit: and a party was invited to meet them. She was very pretty, and an heiress: altogether an irreproachable match—as John Clanwaring with his caution and his pride was sure to make. It served, by contrast, to make darker the marriage contracted by Geoffry: and if by ill-luck Mr. Clanwaring met his brother, he would pass him as scornfully as he might have passed some despicable character—say Randy Black, for instance—his head in the air. At the fortnight's end, the company quitted Beechhurst Dene again: all, save John Clanwaring and his wife. They remained on for another week or two; but their established home was in London.

A few days before their departure, the brothers again met. It was a lovely September day: the sunlight lay on the plains, the woods were beginning to assume their beautiful autumn tints. Mr. Clanwaring, his wife on his arm, was about to cross a stile in the Dene woods, when Geoffry appeared at it on the other side. He, Geoffry, was at it first: but in courtesy to the lady drew back to wait. John Clanwaring got over, handed over his wife, and walked on with her. Save that he snatched his coat round him that it should not touch his brother's in passing, he took no notice whatever. It galled Geoffry: he thought John might just have named his wife to him when they thus met, face to face.

"I wonder whether he would have done it did he know there's a chance that I shall soon be lying low?" thought Geoffry. "And that chance exists. I cannot well mistake my own feelings: and Priar, unless I am mistaken, knows it better than I do."

Geoffry was on his road home then, to the bailiff's lodge. Busy with Sir Dene's affairs that morning, out of doors as well as in, he had been letting the time slip away, past the dinner hour. He could not ride about as he used before his accident. Maria would be waiting for him he knew; and so he put his best foot foremost. Not the fleet foot it once was: for quick walking hurt him nearly as much as riding.

The first person he saw on entering his cottage home was Mr. Priar. Geoffry mentally leaped to the truth at once: his wife must be ill. Even so. Her illness had been waited for for some days now: Geoffry was expecting a little heir. Heir! It was a slip of the pen. Heir to what?—his misfortunes? What contrasts exist! When John's wife should present him with a son, it would be the future inheritor of a title

and of the rich lands of Beechhurst Dene: Geoffry's child would be but a humble dependent. Could poor Geoffry have foreseen how humble, how dependent, how despised and put upon, he might have wished to take the child with him when he himself should die.

"Is all going well?" was Geoffry's first question to the surgeon.

"I—hope it will," answered Mr. Priar—and the slight want of assurance in his tone at once struck Geoffry. "We have been sending after you to Beechhurst Dene, Mr. Geoffry Clanwaring: the messenger brought back word that you were not there."

"I left Beechhurst Dene two hours ago. I had things to attend to up at Simmonds's. Is my wife very ill?"

"Not very; not particularly so. You can see her."

Mrs. Geoffry Clanwaring was quite alone in her sickness. Her mother, Mrs. Owen, was confined to her bed with illness just then; her sister, Mrs. Arde, growing gradually but surely weaker, was not able to come. Maria herself had been in more delicate health all the summer than she need have been: her father's death, and the sad manner of it, had shaken her greatly.

But if Mr. Priar had entertained any doubt of the result, it would seem to have been needless. The baby made its appearance, and was a fine boy. When Geoffry first took the little curiosity in his arms, he felt prouder of him than if he had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth.

"How light its hair is, Maria!"

"Yes: it is like yours," she answered with a happy smile. "I can trace a likeness to you. And to Sir Dene."

"He'll be a fine little shaver if he's like my father. We shall have to choose a name for him, love."

Just a day or two of these fond hopes, this delusive security, and then a change came. Dangerous symptoms set in for Maria Clanwaring; and a horseman went galloping to Worcester for one of the best surgeons the city afforded. He came and saw her: in conjunction with the dismayed Mr. Priar; and they no doubt did their best, if there was anything, best or worst, that could be done. It was all in vain: the life, fleeting away, could not be arrested. The baby also began to droop: it almost seemed as if it would go with its mother. The truth had to be told to Geoffry.

Evening came on. The bustle of the going and coming of the medical men, of the awful shock, was past, and over the house and household reigned a solemn stillness. She lay on her bed, pale, quiet, exhausted, resigned: far more resigned than poor stunned Geoffry. He sat by the fire, more like one in a dream than a living man: but for disturbing her, he would have taken the pale sweet face from its pillow to his breast, and cried aloud to heaven over it in his despairing anguish.

"Perfect quiet, mind, Mr. Geoffry Clanwaring," had been the doctors' urgent warning to him. "Once excite her to emotion, and all will be over."

So there he sat, controlling his bitter grief he knew not how; his golden hair damp with the struggle, his blue eyes o'erladen with misery.

The clergyman came; and Geoffry and his dying wife partook of Christ's last sacrament together. Next, the baby was brought forward for baptism: Maria wished it done. Geoffry leaned over his wife to ask her wishes about the name.

"Call him Tom," she feebly said. "It was my dear little brother's name who died: and it is one of yours, Geoffry."

"Tom," said Geoffry, returning to the clergyman.

"Tom?" echoed the minister questioningly, his fingers already in the water.

"Tom," repeated Geoffry.

And so "Tom" the child was christened.

So bewildered and confused with trouble was Geoffry Clanwaring, that he never remembered until too late that the name ought to have been Thomas. It was a mistake: but a mistake that did not cost him a regretful thought. Under the shadow of real calamities, trifling ones go for nothing.

Almost before they were alone again, the last moments approached for Maria. Geoffry might give way as much as he pleased then; nothing of emotion could harm her more in this world. He held her to him mid his sobs of anguish, his hot tears falling on her face.

"Not for very long, my darling; the separation won't be for long. But a little while, a few weeks, or months at most, and I shall have followed you."

She looked at him as if scarcely understanding.

"Ay, it is so. I have kept it from you, Maria: I meant to let this illness of yours be well over before I spoke. And oh my wife, my dear one, I know not how I should have told you—or how have borne to leave you here behind me. I am dying of that gun-shot wound, Maria, there was some fatal inward injury. I have suspected it all along: and to-day when the doctors were here, I got them to acknowledge that they suspect it too. You will not have long to wait for me on the other side."

She was past speaking much, but a glad light shone in her dim eyes. Geoffry's sobs made the room sound again. Let us leave them together for the last hour.

It had all been so rapid that there was no time to apprise the world of the danger that had suddenly set in. But the news was spreading now, and some people were arriving in hot consternation.

Mary Barber was the first. She had been staying at Worcester for

some days with Mrs. Arde, had only come back to Harebell Farm that afternoon. Geoffry Clanwaring's modest household consisted but of one servant, Susan Cole, eldest daughter of Cole the farrier; a good-natured, talkative girl of eighteen, with frizzly-looking hair the colour of old rope, and a fixed colour in her face. She was in the kitchen with the nurse when Mary Barber arrived. And when Mary Barber heard that—instead of the danger she had come to inquire into—life was all but over, she, after giving a minute or two to digest the shock, nearly shook Susan Cole.

"You heartless, wicked huzzy! You couldn't come up to say so?"

"I didn't know it till just now," returned Susan, who was crying silently in grief for her pretty young mistress. "It have come on us as sudden as a blow. As to master, he's like a man dazed. I don't believe he have been able to recollect nothing. But he *did* send to the farm."

Mary Barber, standing upright in the small kitchen, thought over the past two or three hours. Upon her return from Worcester, Joan had said a messenger had been up to say there was a change in young Mrs. Clanwaring: and Mary Barber came off, but not at once, for she had never thought of *this* change.

"Where's the baby?" she asked, under her breath. For, now that the first shock to her feelings had been relieved by blaming somebody, the extent of the calamity subdued her.

"He's sleeping in his cradle," said the nurse. "He seems a bit better to-night than he did earlier in the day."

"Whatever will be done about bringing him up?"

"Oh, as to that," returned the nurse, "children 'll sometimes thrive as well without their mothers as with 'em."

A movement overhead, and a call from Geoffry sent the nurse and Mary Barber upstairs, the latter flinging off her cloak and bonnet as she went. The last moment was at hand: the fleeting spirit and the earthly body were fighting in their separation.

"My poor lamb!" wailed Mary Barber, leaning over the pale face, quiet again now. "Oh wasn't it enough that your poor father should have went—that your sister should be fast going—but that the Lord must take you! We'd say that it was cruelly hard—only that His ways are not as our ways."

There was a gentle flutter on the face, and Maria turned her head upon the pillow, looking away to a distant part of the room.

"Yes," she said in a distinct, cheerful voice, as if answering a call.

Geoffry was hastening round, but Mary Barber lifted her finger for silence. She knew the sign—and what it meant.

"Hush, Mr. Geoffry. She's passing now. It was her answer to the summons!"

And the spirit did pass, even as the woman said it. Passed with a deep, long sigh. Mary Barber caught up her breath with another.

"I knew that death was coming to the family, Mr. Geoffry: but I thought it was for Mrs. Arde. I knew it by my dreams."

As Geoffry quitted the room, leaving the two women in it, quitting it like one who gropes his blind way in the dark, so stunned were all his faculties, he became dimly conscious of a loud, sharp, knocking somewhere. It was in reality at the panel of his house-door—but it seemed to him miles off; or perhaps only in some distant region of his brain. Susan Cole opened the door, and the voice of Sir Dene was heard. That aroused him to passing events, and he went down stairs. Sir Dene was standing in the parlour; their one sitting-room, that Maria had made so pretty. Vases of bright flowers stood about, fresh yet: she had put them there on the morning of the day she was taken ill.

"Geoffry, what's this I hear?—That your wife is in imminent danger," began Sir Dene. "Coming out just now for a stroll after dinner, I met Cole, and he mentioned it."

"My wife is dead, father."

Sir Dene looked at his son, as if he quite believed his mind must be wandering.

"Yes, she's dead," was repeated by Geoffry's quivering lips. "Only just now: not three minutes since."

"Lord bless me!" broke from Sir Dene.

He backed against the upright bookcase, and stood staring, waiting for his senses to come to him.

"Why!—you told me yourself this morning, Geoffry, that she was going on all right!"

"And so she was, father. A change took place an hour or two after mid-day. Priar came, and Dr. Woodyatt was fetched. They could not save her."

"It is awfully sudden," cried the dismayed Sir Dene. "Poor thing! Poor young thing!"

Geoffry, come to the end of his equanimity, put his head down on the table, and sobbed aloud. Great bursting sobs that shook him. Sir Dene wondered whether there was any brandy in the house, or other kind of cordial, and where he could find it. Self-reproach was stinging Sir Dene keenly. When those whom we have injured or not sufficiently regarded in life, are dead, it is then that repentance touches us. He had not been as kind as he might to this poor young girl, now gone from them all for ever. True he had been pleasant and courteous to her when they met; but he had never invited her inside his gates, he had not treated her as a daughter-in-law: and he wished now that he had done it, in spite of the prejudices of his eldest son and heir.

"Don't give way, Geoff, my boy. Don't! Bless my heart, but this is a dreadful blow, and I'm—I'm truly sorry for it. Poor young girl!"

but little more than a child ! Can I find a drop of brandy for you, Geoff ? ”

Geoffry did not want brandy : he could not have touched it. Drying away his tears, swallowing down his bitter sobs, striving manfully with his emotion, he there and then disclosed to his father the fact that he himself (as he truly believed) should not live long after his wife ; that the same grave might almost be kept open for him. It would have been a greater shock to Sir Dene than the other, only he did not put faith in it.

“ Dying of that gun-shot wound ! ” he repeated. “ Geoffry, my poor fellow, things are wearing their gloomiest hue to you just now ; ’tis but natural. If there is anything wrong inwardly, we’ll soon have you set to rights.”

“ Father, I don’t think there’ll be any more setting to rights for me ; I don’t indeed. You can ask Priar or Woodyatt about it : they know, I fancy. It’s only within a week, or so, that I have felt sure of it myself.”

“ Nonsense, Geoffry. It was not much of a hurt at the worst. You shall be doctored up.”

Geoffry said no more. But a sure and certain prevision lay upon him this evening, that his own end was not far off. It might come upon them almost as suddenly at the last, he thought, as his wife’s had come upon him.

“ Geoffry, I’d like to see her,” said Sir Dene when he rose to depart.

They went up the narrow staircase with hushed footsteps. The house was like one of death, in its utter stillness. The infant slept in another room ; Sir Dene never once thought about him at all.

They had already dressed her for the grave. The sweet, calm, pale face looked almost like that of an angel. Sir Dene felt pain, regret, grief—nearly as he had when his own wife died.

“ Poor darling !—poor innocent child ! ” he murmured, touching her brow. “ May the good Lord have taken her to His happy Rest ! ”

“ She was kind and good and pure as one of Heaven’s angels, father.” And Geoffry’s sobs broke forth again.

As Sir Dene was walking up the Hollow on his way home, the death-bell suddenly struck out from Hurst Leet Church. Mary Barber had sent Susan Cole flying to tell the sexton. Sir Dene stopped and listened : it seemed to bring more forcibly than ever the event before him. Three times two : and then the sharp quick strokes to denote that the soul was passing.

“ I wonder who’s gone now ? ”

The irreverent words, for their careless tone made them so, absolutely startled Sir Dene. Standing to listen, his back turned to his home, his face towards the village, he had not observed that any one was near.

Tempted by the beauty of the evening—a warm still moonlight night—Mr. Clanwaring had come out for a stroll just as his father had previously done. It was he who spoke.

"What did you say?" asked Sir Dene, sharply turning upon him.

"I thought you were listening to the passing-bell, sir. Some village woman, I suppose, has dropped off."

"They'd not trouble themselves to ring the passing-bell at this time of night for a 'village woman,' I expect," said Sir Dene sternly, for the words grated harshly on his present frame of mind. In truth he had not been feeling very genially towards his heir as he walked up. But for him and his prejudices, Sir Dene would have relented to Geoffry and his poor young wife: he saw things clearly now, and knew it.

John Clanwaring wondered at the tone. "Do you know who it's for then, sir?" he asked.

"It is for your brother's wife."

"Who?" cried John Clanwaring, forgetting his grammar in his surprise.

"For your brother's wife. Don't I speak plain enough? Geoffry's sweet pretty young wife: poor Owen's daughter. She's dead."

"I'm sure I'm sorry to hear it, for her sake," said Mr. Clanwaring, somewhat taken aback. "It is very sudden, is it not, sir?"

"It is sudden. You were harshly contemptuous to her, John, in your judgment: she is gone where neither harshness nor contempt can reach her. She looks like an angel, lying there, with her pale, innocent face."

"It is a sad fate for her, poor thing: I really pity her, sir," admitted John Clanwaring. And there was a pause.

"I am not sure but Geoffry will be the one to go next, John," resumed Sir Dene. "We shall wish then, perhaps, that we had been a bit kinder to them."

"Is he likely to die of grief?" asked John.

"Grief's a complaint *you* 'll never die of; you've not got feeling enough," retorted Sir Dene. "Geoffry talks of that shot he got awhile ago; he fears it left some fatal injury behind it. For my part I think it must be only fancy."

"Of course it is only fancy," returned John Clanwaring in a tone of assertion. "Were there any permanent injury, Geoffry could not go about as he does."

They fell into silence. The quick strokes of the bell were dying away to give place to its slow and monotonous toll. It had a weird, solemn sound, breaking out at intervals in the stillness of the autumn night.

CHAPTER XV.

SEEN BY MOONLIGHT.

"You had better come back to Beechhurst Dene, Geoffry."

The speaker was Sir Dene. They had just returned from the funeral, and Sir Dene had entered Geoffry's home with him, leaving the other mourners—John Clanwaring, George Arde, and William Owen—to disperse. Mr. Clanwaring had condescended to attend the funeral. Sir Dene put it to him strongly—that he *ought* to do it. So he delayed yet his departure from town, and waited. It probably went against the grain to stand side by side with William Owen, mourners at the same grave: but John, cool and impassive, made no sign. He had condescended to shake hands with Geoffry, and say he sympathized with him in his loss. Sir Dene went in with Geoffry afterwards. The little dwelling seemed strangely still and solitary; and the baronet felt it as a chill.

"You had better come back to Beechhurst Dene, and be taken care of," he repeated. "Now that the poor young thing's gone, there's nobody to do anything for you here; nothing to keep you in the place. Geoff, my boy, I never disliked her."

"No, father, I don't think you did."

"I shall never forget that time I saw her at Malvern, toasting a pikelet at the fire. Pretty creature! standing there to face me, so sweet and modest and humble, in her white India muslin frock and the blue ribbons in her hair. I know real India muslin when I see it: nobody better. She couldn't put the toasting fork down at first, Geoff, for timidity, but kept it in her hand. 'Twas as pretty a picture as a man ever saw."

Geoffry, who was beginning to look sadly worn and thin, made no answer. His heart was brim-full.

"Then you'll come back home, Geoff?"

"Yes, father, thank you; I think I had better. If John does not object."

"John object!—John be—be shot!" exploded the baronet, pulling up the word he had been about to speak when he remembered where he had just been. "It's not John's house yet, that he should rule it. He and his wife are going posting off again, I'm glad to say: somehow things are never so pleasant when he is at home. Come to-morrow: to-night, if you will. You must never think of running away from me again, Geoff."

Geoffry smiled faintly. "Not in the same manner that I did before, father. I'll promise you that."

"Nor in any other, I hope," was Sir Dene's quiet rejoinder. "We'll nurse you into strength at the Dene."

Accordingly on the following day in the forenoon, Geoffry Clanwaring walked up to his old home, just as though he were going to make a call, or to do an hour's work in the business parlour as usual. He carried in his arms his not yet fortnight old baby, wrapped in a red shawl. As he was about to enter the front gates, there came thundering down the avenue a close carriage-and-four, the post-boys spurring their horses to make the exit in proper style, after the fashion of the day. The carriage bore the arms of John Clanwaring, the heir: he sat in it with his wife; an attendant man and maid in the rumble behind. Geoffry stood aside to let it pass. No one saw him but the valet, who touched his hat—and wondered no doubt what Mr. Geoffry Clanwaring had got in the red bundle. They were commencing their journey to London. Mrs. Clanwaring, he saw, had no mourning on.

"And yet Maria was every whit as good as she; ay, and better," thought Geoffry: and as he went on up the avenue, he could not see the ground for his blinding tears.

Not tears for the lack of black on Mrs. Clanwaring. No. But this coming home with the little helpless burthen, brought all too painfully to his mind what he had lost.

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Sir Dene, as Geoffry sat down in the library, and undid the shawl. "Why—that's your baby, Geoffry."

"Yes, father. I couldn't leave him behind."

"Bless the child! I declare I forgot all about him. Well, the women shall take care of him. There's plenty of them to do it. What's his name?"

"His name's Tom," replied Geoffry. "She was anxious about it before she died, and I had it done. The child drooped and ailed that day, just as though it knew its mother was leaving it. It seems all right now."

"You mean Thomas, I suppose."

"No: Tom. The mistake was mine. I was confused with grief and said 'Tom' twice over to the parson, never recollecting that it should have been Thomas. It will not matter, father: Tom is as good a name for him as any other."

"No, it won't matter," replied Sir Dene. "What does he live upon, Geoff?—Sop?"

"He lives upon barley water and milk," said Geoffry. "He won't cost much. Susan Cole is bringing some up: she can show the maids here how to feed him."

The child, who had slept through this, awoke now, opening his eyes. Sir Dene advanced to look at him—such a little face, it was, peeping out of the shawl. Geoffry took off the cambric cap, and showed his bits of fair hair.

"He has got just the look that you had at his age, Geoffry. I remember it well. The first of you born, John, had a black head like his

mother ; you were fair, like me. It's a pretty baby : it will be just like you."

"So poor Maria said. Like me and like you, she thought."

"Ay : at your age I was much what you are, Geoffry. Poor little motherless lambkin !" added Sir Dene pityingly, as he stroked the baby's face.

"Soon to be fatherless also," spoke Geoffry.

"No, no, my boy ; I trust not," said Sir Dene.

But Geoffry shook his head : he knew better.

"Father, you'll give him a bite and a sup here when I am gone, a pillow in some odd corner, won't you?"—and the words seemed to come from the very depths of an aching heart. "He'll be in nobody's way, poor little waif."

"I will, Geoff," heartily answered Sir Dene, his eyes dimmed by some earnest tears, that rose and were checked. "I promise it you. The child shall be as welcome to his bit and his sup as you were. There's my hand upon it."

People rarely give themselves more trouble than they can help. None of the maids showed themselves too ready to undertake the (at best) onerous charge of an infant, as proposed by Sir Dene : and when Susan Cole arrived with the barley water and milk for its food, and sundry of its clothes, tied up in a large silk handkerchief, the servants, who did pretty much as they liked, told her she had better remain for a day or two, and see to the child. The day or two grew into a month or two, and that into a period indefinite, Susan Cole taking the entire charge ; and Sir Dene falling in with the arrangement as if it was a matter of course, without a word either way. He was very fond of the child, would often nurse and toss him : and when he saw its baby sleeves tied up with black ribbons and a black sash round its waist, that Susan Cole put on the day poor Geoffry died, Sir Dene held the little face to his own for some minutes, as if that black made a fonder link between them.

So the baby grew, and thrived, and got its teeth, and learnt to walk and talk, just as other healthy and happy children do : and Sir Dene loved the boy ; and Susan Cole was proud of him ; and Gander admired him more than he had admired anything since poor Geoffry himself was young ; and the other servants alternately indulged and snubbed him. With it all—in spite of his being Sir Dene's grandson and that he had his home at Beechhurst Dene—he was not altogether considered by the servants as a child of the house ; he did not get the deference that a son of, for instance, John Clanwaring would have received.

The boy, as he got older and stronger, incurred the danger of being allowed to run wild. Sir Dene had about as much notion of the proper way of bringing up a child as he had of a young tiger ; and nobody else

interfered to suggest. There was no day nursery. As long as the child was in arms Susan Cole sat where she pleased with him—mostly in the kitchen or servants' hall; when he could run he roamed where he would about the house at will. Sir Dene would pick him up and talk to him, and put him by his side at table, and call for a plate and spoon for "the child." If Tom ran out to see Sir Dene mount his horse, Sir Dene would lift him on to the saddle, bare headed and bare armed, and ride off with him, perhaps for miles, in the summer weather. When not with Sir Dene he would be left very much to his own devices, for Susan Cole was a frightful gossip, and regarded social intercourse with anybody who would talk to her, as the sweetest thing in life. There were times also when Sir Dene was away from Beechhurst, and during these seasons Tom got very little attention at all. Gander, who was regarded by Sir Dene as head of the servants, and in a degree ruled them, would be with his master, and at home it would be high life below stairs. To save trouble, little Tom's plate and fork would be set at the kitchen table: he would be looked for and brought in to meals: and that was about all the care. He was one of those quiet, happy children who amuse themselves: would sit for hours on the library floor, looking at a picture-book, or in some remote room amidst the animals out of his Noah's ark. The servants knew the child was safe; and that sufficed. Cole the farrier had a journeyman; he was Susan's sweetheart;—consequently she passed a great deal more time in her father's forge than in looking after Tom. In fact, save for the odd moments of tenderness bestowed upon him by Sir Dene, the little child was very much what his poor father had called him the day he brought him up in the red shawl—a waif. He was a wonderfully pretty and engaging child, with the sweet temper and gentle manners of his mother, and the kindly blue eyes and fair curls of his father. A child to be loved and cherished: a child that with proper training would make a good and noble man: a child to whom God had been generous, in implanting in his heart a full portion of most excellent seed.

Sir Dene was often away. He had taken permanent rooms in London, and could go there at will. John Clanwaring never came down now to Beechhurst Dene. His wife's health had been very delicate since the birth of her child, a girl; John said she was not strong enough to move about, and therefore *he* did not. At any rate, it was a good excuse for his remaining in the place he liked best and never cared to be out of—London. Perhaps this took Sir Dene there. John was not his favourite son—he was gone—but John was better than none: and the baronet found it very lonely at Beechhurst Dene. So, he and Gander away for weeks together, the servants took their own ease and Tom his own way. No wonder the neglected child grew fond of going to Mrs. Owen's: once or twice he had run off thither alone. He also went to Squire Arde's.

No longer the old Squire ; the little man who was so odd and quaint ; but a new one. Changes were everywhere. The strange little old man was dead, and George Arde reigned at the Hall and was called Squire in his turn. The will he left was nearly as odd as he had been : so at least, thought the public. It was certainly unexpected. A notion—gathered from observation of the old Squire's character, and perhaps from occasional words let fall by him during his later life—had become fixed in men's minds : that he would never leave a shilling of his money to any relative : but all of it to charities, and especially to those charities connected with the insane. "Droitwich 'll be the better for his savings," quoth the neighbours to one another—alluding to the well-known asylum at that place—when the news went forth that Squire Arde was dead. "He'll direct the Hall and all its belongings, inside and out, to be sold ; and Droitwich mad-house 'll get the whole on't."

The neighbours were mistaken. Squire Arde's will did not give a shilling to any charity : Droitwich asylum (or, as it was universally put then "madhouse") was not as much as mentioned in it. The Hall, with all that pertained to it and the income attaching to it, was left to George Arde, to his own intense surprise.

George Arde's wife was not then dead. In her very delicate state she had lived on much longer than any one could have supposed, fluttering always, as may be said, between life and death. Now and then the old Squire would call when he was at Worcester, and see the child, little Mary, to whom he seemed to have taken a fancy. Necklaces, and trifles of that description that had belonged to his own dead child, the other Mary, he would bring it. "I should not be much surprised at his leaving her a thousand pounds," said George Arde one day to his wife when the Squire had been, and brought a *new* coral with silver bells.

Not one thousand, did he leave the child, but twenty. The will bequeathed a certain sum of money to "Mary, daughter of my third cousin, George Arde." Which sum, already out at safe and good interest, would represent twenty thousand pounds on the day Mary Arde should be eighteen : and it was to be hers then unconditionally. So little Mary, granddaughter of the late unfortunate Robert Owen, and cousin of young Tom Clanwaring, turned out to be an heiress.

Before George Arde took up his abode at the Hall, his wife died. She had been in so weak a state, and it had become so evident that her death was near, that the trouble of removing was spared her. She died in the small house where they had lived, and was buried in the same mouldy old church that had witnessed poor Maria Owen's stolen marriage—St. Peter's. George Arde and his little daughter went to the Hall then.

This removal occurred when Tom was about a year old. Two years have already gone by since. The boy was fond of going to the Hall. Susan Cole enjoyed the society of the servants ; Tom that of the little

girl. George Arde welcomed the lad freely, whenever he was at home : but he had taken to visit about a good deal. Rumours of his second marriage were abroad : George Arde, owner of Arde Hall and Squire of the parish, young still and an agreeable man, was no undesirable match, and was courted in the county accordingly.

Would the little girl, the heiress, live to come into her wealth ? The question was arising. Symptoms of delicacy (she was her mother's child all over) were beginning to manifest themselves, and it was feared she might *not*. George Arde was intensely fond of her : and perhaps the first thing that put second marriage into his head was the wish to have some kind and gentle lady in his house who would watch over the child carefully, and stand to it in the light of a mother. Once having made up his mind to this, Mr. Arde was not long about it. He chose his second wife from one of the first and proudest families in the county. It was rather singular that the day of the marriage was little Tom's birthday : he was three years old.

On that self-same night occurred an incident which must be mentioned. Robert Owen appeared again. The miserable rumours—that his spirit came back to trouble the earth—had never died away. From whatever source arising, whether delusion, superstitious fancy, or actual (if unaccountable) fact, they but gained ground and spread. No sooner had one report of the appearance had time to subside and people began to forget it, than another fright would come. Now it would be a belated labourer, going home at a tardy hour up Harebell Lane ; now a carter's boy ; now some traveller on his way to the Trailing Indian. On this night that we are now speaking of, two people saw it, one of whom was Black.

Black had been down to Hurst Leet on an errand. Coming home again about nine o'clock through a flood of moonlight, he burst into the Trailing Indian in a fearful state : his breath gone, the sweat pouring off him, his hair on end. More abject terror could not well be seen. Mr. Priar happened to be there—for Mrs. Black's sickly state required him to pay her an occasional visit and he would go up at any odd moment when leisure allowed him ; two or three men were also drinking in the kitchen, when in burst the landlord in the extraordinary state described. That his fear had no sham in it, could not be mistaken : though how it was possible for a hardened man like Black to feel afraid of any earthly or ghostly thing, Mr. Priar, for one, could not imagine. Mixing some brandy and water, the doctor made him drink it. Black's teeth chattered as he told what he had seen—Robert Owen standing at that part above Harebell Lane, where he was supposed to have fallen from, and gazing down at the pond. Question after question was poured into Black's ear, especially from the startled men : but he could tell no more than he had told. Coming up the Lane by the pond pretty quick, he happened to turn his eyes up to the fence above the water ; and there,

leaning over it, was the figure of Robert Owen, his face as white as it had been when he lay dead, his beard as silvery as it was in life. Black did not stay to give a second look, but came off as fast as his shaking legs would carry him : and the strangest thing of all was, that he should sit there in his kitchen and confess to it. But fear takes pride, and reticence too, out of the most hardy man.

Before Black had at all recovered his equanimity, or had done trembling, a choice friend of his came in—Michael Geach, who had arrived that evening on one of his unexpected visits to the Trailing Indian. One might have expected ridicule of the tale at least from Geach ; but on the contrary it seemed to make him rather uncomfortable.

"I never was a coward," he observed ; "but it's no light thing 'ud persuade me into Harebell Lane of a night now. Hanged if I'd not rather come slap upon a body whitening in chains on the gibbet, than see Owen's ghost. Cheer up, Randy, and don't shake so ; you be all blue."

"When did *you* come here?" asked Black, in no pleasant tones.

"Me! I've been here this hour, and more ; a waiting for you to come in."

"Why couldn't you ha' sent word you was——Drat it altogether! *You* needn't shake."

The concluding observations were made to Black's wife. His eyes happened to fall on her as he was addressing Geach, and he left his sentence to that worthy gentleman unfinished. Poor Robert Owen might be a ghost, but he could not look like one more than Mrs. Black did. Her face was livid ; her disabled hands entwined themselves one within the other in a nervous dread, that Mr. Prior rarely saw equalled. Black, forgetting his own symptoms, told her she was a fool, and drove her from the room.

Well, Randy Black was not the only one to see the ghost that night. And if the reader despises me for repeating these stories of superstition, I can plead but one apology—that I am relating only what absolutely passed, the events of this really true tale. The other one to see it was William Owen.

The flying reports, that Robert Owen's spirit could not rest, had annoyed greatly the inmates of Harebell Farm. As was only natural. Even superstitious Mary Barber, burying her private convictions in regard for the honour of the family, protested far and wide that it could not be true. None of them had seen anything to warrant it, up to this time : not even William, who was often abroad at night on his land. But not on that part of it that lay towards the Trailing Indian. The very fact that the ghost was said to haunt those fields, and especially the two-acre meadow, caused him not to put sheep there. The shepherd absolutely refused to go near the spot at night.

On this evening William Owen had gone on foot to a farm house, a

mile or two beyond the Trailing Indian. Mary Barber had got a nice bit of hot supper ready for him, and when nine o'clock struck she wondered how much longer he meant to be. Soon afterwards she heard his footsteps, and opened the back door to admit him.

Could it be the moonlight that made his face look so white? He took no notice of her, but walked straight into the best kitchen; where his supper was laid.

"What's the matter now?" cried Mary Barber following him, and gazing in surprise at his strange countenance. "Be you took sick, Mr. William?"

His face was whiter than death: he was wiping the moisture from it with a trembling hand. Mary Barber saw that no light matter was stirring him.

"What is it?" she said, sinking her voice to a whisper that seemed to partake of his own dread emotion.

"I have seen my father," was his low answer.

"No!" she exclaimed.

"Mary, as true as that you and I are here, living, I saw him. There's no mistake about it. He looked exactly as I've seen him look a hundred times in life: his old cap on, and his white beard flowing."

"Heaven be good to us!" cried Mary. "Where was this?"

"I crossed over the stile opposite the Trailing Indian, to come home straight over the fields," said William Owen. "Just past the narrow path between the grove of trees and the fence above the pond, I chanced to look back: and there, standing with his back against the trees, looking after me as it seemed, I saw my father. I stood like one turned to stone, Mary, not knowing I b'lieve whether to go for'ard or back'ard, or where to run to; and there *it* stood, the two of us staring at one another. The next moment the thing was gone; vanished into air, as it seemed to me; and I came away, leaping hedges and ditches."

Mary Barber caught up her breath with a gasp; her young master bent his head on the face of the old-fashioned mantelpiece. Presently he spoke again.

"I have been thinking whether there was anything to cause me to look back; any sound, or that. It could hardly have been chance."

"Nay, 'twas no chance, Mr. William. I—wonder—what—it can want?" she slowly added.

William Owen could not say what, any more than she could. All he knew was, that he would give half of his future life not to have been subjected to the terror—to the distress—to the calamity altogether.

"You should have gone up and asked it, Mr. William."

William Owen looked at her, a strange horror in his eyes. "I'd not have done it for that tureen full of sovereigns," he said, pointing to the large soup tureen on the dresser. "Were I ever to see it again, Mary, I could not stay on the Farm."

"It's an awful thing."

"Take care that you keep it from my mother, Mary."

"As from all other folks, as well as her," was Mary Barber's answer.

However, the story got wind. At least, a suspicion of it. Added to the more public account of what had befallen Randy Black, it was enough to frighten a timid neighbourhood: and people grew to have a mortal dread of Harebell Lane after the dark had fallen.

CHAPTER XVI.

VERY MUCH OF A WAIF.

"GRANDMA!"

Mrs. Owen, who had dropped into a doze in her easy chair, did not hear the call. The handle of the door (rather a difficult one to open) was twisted this way and that by little fingers, and the appeal came again.

"Grandma! Won't you let me in, grandma?"

"Is it my dear little Baby Tom?" cried Mrs. Owen, rising to admit the intruder.

Baby Tom it was, poor Geoffry's orphan boy. Mrs. Owen tottered back to her seat, the child in her hand. She was always weak and ill, as her most delicate and gentle face betrayed. Never strong, the calamitous death of her husband, and the subsequent death of her daughter, had been nearly fatal to her. She certainly lived on: but it was as a woman who has nearly done with this world, whose whole thoughts are in the next.

She took off the child's straw hat—a broad-brimmed hat with a bit of yellow ribbon tied round the crown. Lifting him on her knee, she pushed back the golden hair from his open forehead, and gazed into his earnest, dark blue eyes. He was little for his age; three years old on the previous day—for this was the morning following the events related in the last chapter—he might have been taken for not much more than two: but, as is sometimes the case with these small bodies, the mind was unusually advanced. But for his exceedingly retiring disposition, the shy, modest sensitiveness of his nature, with its invariably accompanying quality, reticence, he might have been that most undesirable thing—a precocious child. His gentle manners saved him from it.

As if divining somewhat of the peace of Mrs. Owen's inward life, the boy when with her was ever more gentle than at other times, strangely thoughtful, quiet, and tractable. It has been said that this story is not one of ideal fiction: and people were wont to remark to one another during this, the later portion of Mrs. Owen's years, that her life lay in heaven. While she was looking at those wonderful eyes

—and the child really had such, they were so beautiful—he began to cry.

“Why, Tom, what is it?”

“Grandpapa rode away without me. Susan wouldn’t make haste with my things, and he did not wait. When I cried, she said I wanted a shaking.”

“Did Susan bring you here?”

“No. I came.”

Mrs. Owen need scarcely have asked the question. The child had come off without superfluous ceremony, in his brown holland pinafore and old straw hat: Susan would have dressed him first.

“Will you read me a Bible story, grandma?”

“Ay,” said Mrs. Owen. “Run and fetch the book.”

There were Bible stories for children in those days just as there are in these; but they did not get read so much. Mrs. Owen took care that Tom should hear them. He could just reach the little book from the side-table, and brought it to her. He was so fond of hearing one of the stories that the book opened of itself at the place—Christ forgiving the thief on the cross. His little tongue, its language imperfect as yet, was never tired of asking questions: sometimes Mrs. Owen’s ingenuity was puzzled to answer.

But it was not only that she read to him: that was the least part. The story over, she would close the book, and talk to him, as on this day, in a loving winning gentle voice. Talk to him of heaven and the glorious happiness of those who should attain to it: of what he must do in this world, or rather try to do, if *he* would be one of them: of patience in long-suffering; of loving kindness to others; of self-sacrifice for their benefit; of truth, and honour, and generosity: all in language suited to his years, but quite clear and forcible. She would impress upon him the great fact that God was ever near him, watching, guiding, hearing, seeing him: and she contrived so to imbue him with the belief in God’s loving care, that the child trusted to it beyond any earthly thing. When a stranger, spending the day with Sir Dene, once asked the child what he most wished for (expecting he would say some choice toy—a sword, a wheelbarrow, or a live rabbit), the answer was, that he might be good and go to heaven. Sir Dene laughed and kissed him: the stranger thought what an odd little boy. Oh but these early lessons did him good service in after years; without them he might never have borne the indignities cast on him.

“Grandma, I’ll never be naughty. Never.”

Mrs. Owen knew too well what the corruptions of the human heart are and the temptations of the world: she only smiled sadly in answer.

“Was mamma ever naughty?”

“Oh yes.”

"And papa?"

"Yes."

"But they went to heaven!"

"Ay, dear. They went very near together, too. The thief on the cross had been very, very naughty; but the moment he asked Jesus to forgive him, Jesus did, you see."

"I'll ask, if ever I am naughty," said the child after a thoughtful pause. "Grandpa Owen went too. And you'll go, grandma. And I'll go."

"But you must first grow up to be a man and do a great, great deal of work in this world, and a great deal of good," said Mrs. Owen.

"God sent us here to work."

"Shall we work in heaven?"

"I don't know. If we do, it will be pleasant work, happy work, angels' work. Yes, Tom, I think we shall."

"Have you had to do a great, great deal of work here, grandma?"

"Yes, a great deal. And I have had to bear a very great deal of sorrow: sorrow, and sickness, and heart-break. But for God's loving help, Tom, I don't think I could have got through it."

"Shall I have a great deal?"

"You will be sure to have it, sooner or later. Don't forget what I have told you, Tom—that God often sends the most to those he loves the best. You must be very brave, in all things."

"Yes, I'll be brave," answered unconscious Tom.

The sitting was over. He jumped down, and ran to find Mary Barber. Mary Barber, preserving damsons in the back kitchen, and also sadly disturbed by William Owen's communication of the previous night, was too busy to have much leisure for Tom. Spreading some of the hot jam upon a slice of bread, she told him to run into the garden and eat it.

Tom was making for the garden in all dutiful obedience—never a more implicitly obedient child than he—but William Owen's dog, Sharp, came barking up to him in play. It would go into a fit of delight at sight of the child. The dog ran, and Tom after it, neglecting his jam, until they reached the gates at Harebell Lane. Sharp bounded over the small one, and knocked down a little girl in a pink cotton bonnet and tattered frock. Tom, with inherent gallantry, ran to pull her up.

It was that child, mentioned a few chapters ago, who had been born at the Trailing Indian the night of Robert Owen's disappearance. She was called Emma Geach. Before the mother was strong enough to leave the inn, Mrs. Black fell ill with rheumatic fever. The woman undertook to nurse her, and to do the work. The illness was a long one, some months in duration, and Mrs. Geach stayed on. After that she would go away and come again by fits and starts; but did not take her

child. The child had never been away from the inn yet : for all that could be seen to the contrary, it seemed likely to be her permanent home. Mrs. Black liked the child, and would have kept her always. Black did not like her. He was almost savagely angry at her being left there : but gossip said, he did not dare to turn her out or insist too strongly on her removal, lest Mrs. Geach in revenge should betray some of the secret doings of the Trailing Indian.

"Don't cry; don't cry," said Tom. "I'll give you some bread-and-jam."

The child stood up at the tempting offer, and ceased roaring. Born six months before Tom, she looked at least a twelvemonth older : a tall child, with chubby red cheeks and eyes of so remarkably light a shade that they might have been called white, rather than blue. Tom tore asunder his piece of bread and jam, and gave her the largest half.

Whether Miss Geach was starved at the Trailing Indian, or that damson jam was amidst luxuries unknown to her, certain it was that she gobbled up the piece in a wonderful fashion. It disappeared before Tom had finished his first bite.

"I want some more," she said, fixing her greedy little eyes on the rest. So Tom, never hesitating, broke it again, but not so deftly as before : the soft and the jam fell to one part, the dry crust, unjammed, to the other. He handed the best to the child, and nibbled away at the dry crust.

"What's your name?" asked Tom.

"Emma. What's yours?"

"Tom. Where d' you live?"

"Up there," she answered, pointing along the lane. "I've got a whistle at home : 'll you come and see him?"

Whistles are charmingly tempting things, and Tom yielded without question. The two children ran up the lane comparing notes. Tom's Noah's ark and picture book, and a whip with a green handle ; against Miss Geach's whistle. The dog, sharing the crust with Tom, leaped beside them. Randy Black met them close to the inn.

"Helloa!—who have ye got here, you little wretch?" cried he to the girl. And she, who seemed to have plenty of assurance for her years (or, as the inmates of the Trailing Indian were wont to put it, "stock") answered boldly, without sign of fear.

"I'm agoing to show him my whistle."

Black had spoken before he well gave a look to the boy ; immediately he knew him for the little grandson of Sir Dene Clanwaring, and of the dead master of Harebell Farm. He had seen him abroad often enough since his babyhood, with Susan Cole or Sir Dene.

"This here baint no place for little gentlefolk, master ; you'd best run home again. As to you, you young pig," he added to the girl, "if you bring stray children here again, I'll souse your ears in the horse-trough."

"Mayn't I see the whistle?" asked Tom, who had not understood a word in ten.

"Wait, will yer," cried independent Miss Emma to Tom. "I'll bring him out."

Black did not interfere to prevent it. He was gazing down at the boy, and whistling softly.

"You 're the very cut o' your father," said he. "Same eyes, same hair, same face. He'd ha' made a second Sir Dene in looks : so 'll you. Not bad uns, them eyes o' yourn."

All the little boy's answer to this was to look up at the man with these self-same eyes. Even Black, the hardened, could but note, you see, their kindly nature, so full of sweetness.

"What's your name?" he went on, less roughly than he was given to speak.

"Tom."

"Baint it Dene? Nor Geoffry?"

"It's Tom," repeated the boy.

"Where's your hat?"

"I left it at grandma's."

The ostler appeared in the yard, and called out some question to his master about corn. As Black went away to give the answer, Emma ran out with the whistle, whistling shrilly with all her might. Black bade her "hush her noise," and gave her a box on the ears, which sent her staggering and threw down the whistle. Perhaps she was used to be boxed, for she did not cry or complain : only waited till he was a few paces from her, and then picked up the whistle. A rough wooden toy with streaks of paint across it, that Mrs. Black had bought of a man at the door for a halfpenny.

Had it been of ivory, mounted in gold, it could not have seemed more precious to little Tom. He whistled, and she whistled, the two taking it by turns : long discordant shrieks enough to frighten the cows, grazing over the way in William Owen's field. Mrs. Black came to the door to see what the cause of the noise might be. A poor, pale woman more shrunk and meek than ever since her long bout of rheumatic fever—which had left her fingers contracted. Young though the girl was, she was already of use in the house : and perhaps that was one of the reasons why Black did not insist upon her removal. Mrs. Black could not have done the entire work now, and a child was a safer inmate than an older woman might be.

"Emma, what boy's that?" demanded Mrs. Black—just as Black had done.

The whistle was too absorbing for Emma to answer immediately. At about the fifth repetition of the question she turned round.

"His name's Tom."

Mrs. Black came slowly out. Her feet were affected as well as her

fingers : in short, she was now not much better than a cripple. She had begun to talk to the children pleasantly enough when Black came back and sent the group flying : Mrs. Black and the girl in doors ; Tom off, down the lane.

"And don't you get fond o' prowling up this way, youngster ; or may be the kidnappers 'll lay hold on ye," was his parting injunction to Tom. "There's lots on 'em at this here house sometimes."

Tom ran along the lane with all the speed of his little legs. He was constitutionally brave ; and by the time he turned the corner, the kidnappers were forgotten. On either side the lane blackberries grew in abundance, and Tom helped himself at will : scratching his hands, and staining his face and pinafore crimson. What with the marks left by the jam and the running juice of the blackberries, Tom might have had his portrait taken as something to be stared at. In this condition he was pounced upon by Susan Cole.

Susan at once administered a couple of shakings. The one for going off on the loose ; it was her own expression ; the other for the crimson state he had put himself into. Tom, full of contrition, looked down at his hands and pinafore : and then offered Susan some choice berries squeezed up in his fingers. Susan, instead of accepting the treat with gratitude, flung up his hand and sent the blackberries flying.

"You ondacious, naughty child ! Where's your hat ?"

"It's on the table at grandma's."

Pulling him along by the hand to the Farm, Susan Cole dashed into the back kitchen, where Joan happened to be washing, and lathered his face and hands well with soapsuds. Then she got his hat and took him off again.

"Now look you here, Master Tom," she said, as they crossed the lane and entered the back gates—"if you take to go off by yourself, nobody knows where, a frightening me into fiddlestrings and getting yourself into this shocking pickle, I'll run away and leave you. I won't stay at the Dene no longer to serve an ungrateful little boy."

Tom was very quiet during the afternoon, playing with Noah's ark and the animals, and giving no trouble to anybody. The servants were busy that day, for company was coming to the Dene. Lady Lydia Clanwaring, the wife of Captain Clanwaring, Sir Dene's youngest son, had just landed from India, with her three children, and her arrival at the Dene might happen at any hour : to-day, to-morrow, the next day. Sir Dene expected her to make a long visit, and looked forward with pleasure to an event that would break the monotony of his home.

Sir Dene reached home for dinner : kept it waiting in fact. Tom's quick ears, on the alert for the sound, heard the horses' hoofs, ran out, and met them halfway down the avenue. The groom behind dismounted ; lifted the child up in front of his master ; and Tom was conveyed back in triumph.

"Master Tom will dine with me," said Sir Dene to Gander, as he led him indoors.

So the child sat beside the baronet; chattering, however, more than eating, for he had just had his tea. No longer the young vagabond all blackberry stains, scouring the lanes at will, bare-headed and bare-armed: but a beautiful little prince in crimson velvet, with a falling plaited frill of snow-white cambric on his neck, and his bright curls hanging down in a shower of gold. Susan Cole took care to dress him always towards evening, in case Sir Dene should ask for him.

"Emma's got a whistle, grandpa," said Tom, when they were left alone at dessert.

"A whistle, has she," replied the baronet, not in the least knowing, or caring, whom "Emma" might be.

"A nice big whistle all green and blue, grandpa. I wish I had one."

"Tell Susan to go to Hurst Leet to-morrow and buy you one," was the answer of Sir Dene.

"I'm afraid she won't. She's angry with me."

"Oh, indeed! Have you been a naughty boy?"

"Yes. I made my hands and face dirty with the blackberries, and spoilt my pinafore."

Sir Dene laughed: a very venial offence, this. "There's another walnut for you, Tom. Peel it well, you rascal."

Tom eat away at his walnut, peeling it first. "Some more water, please, grandpa."

Sir Dene poured out some water. He was sensible enough to know that wine and children were best apart.

"Mary Barber gave me some bread and jam, grandpa. Sharp knocked Emma down, and I——"

A commotion outside stopped the history. A chaise-and-four (the sound was easily distinguished from that of a chaise-and-pair) had clattered up to the front entrance. Dogs barked; servants ran; Gander rushed into the dining-room.

"Sir Dene," said he, "I'll lay anything as it's my Lady Lydia come." And Sir Dene went into the hall.

It was Lady Lydia Clanwaring. A tall, meagre woman, two or three years past thirty, with a pale, discontented face, sharp features, keen, restless black eyes, and thin compressed lips. Her children followed her, black-eyed and black-haired; the eldest, a girl, seven years old, two boys, six and five. As if fatigued with the journey—they had posted up from Portsmouth—Lady Lydia sunk on a chair as soon as she entered the dining-room. The children ran to the table, and stood eyeing eagerly the good things on it.

"They'd like some dessert, Gander," spoke Sir Dene. "Bring plates."

Hats and bonnets were thrown on the floor. The children dragged

chairs to the table, and seated themselves without further ceremony. Tom, who had shyly retreated to the background at the large influx, remained unseen.

"Take care that everything is brought in, Dovet," screamed out Lady Lydia to her maid, in the same hard, shrill voice that had used rather to grate on Sir Dene's ears in India—for he liked that most excellent thing, a sweet voice in woman. "We must have had twenty small packages at least, inside, of one sort or another."

When the bustle had somewhat subsided Sir Dene inquired after his son, who remained in India.

"Captain Clanwaring was very well when we left him, but as cross as a bear," replied Lady Lydia. It was a peculiarity of hers that she always called her husband "Captain Clanwaring." "It is a wearing life out there: and last season was a frightfully hot one. No, Jarvis, you *can't* have more wine; you are going to have supper. Good gracious, Louisa, don't crack that walnut with your teeth! Jarvis, crack it for your sister."

"Crack it for her, Otto," said Master Jarvis imperiously, to his brother. And the younger one cracked the walnut.

"Captain Clanwaring says there's no chance of his getting leave. None. Just now——"

The words died away on Lady Lydia's tongue. She had turned from her children to face Sir Dene again; and stopped in utter astonishment. A beautiful child, habited in crimson velvet, with blue eyes and golden hair, was leaning familiarly against Sir Dene, had stolen his little hand within his. What child could it be?

"Who is that?" demanded Lady Lydia.

"It is my little grandson," said Sir Dene.

Little grandson! That John Clanwaring the heir had an infant son in long clothes, Lady Lydia knew. There could be no other grandson. She thought she had heard, as the French express it, *à tort et à travers*.

"What grandson? Who is he, Sir Dene?"

Sir Dene answered by taking the child on his knee. "Tell the lady what your name is, and who you are."

"It's Tom," said the child.

"What else?" continued Sir Dene.

"Tom Clanwaring."

"Well—now tell who you are."

"I'm grandpapa's little boy."

Sir Dene, pleased with the words, kissed him fondly. Lady Lydia knitted her brow and sent forth some keen glances from her black and restless eyes.

"He is the son of my dear boy, Geoffry, who's dead and gone, Lady Lydia. Poor Geoff left him to me as a legacy."

It took Lady Lydia a minute or two to digest the words—and she did not fully comprehend, even then. That Geoffry Clanwaring had made some low marriage before his death, and so brought disgrace on himself and the Clanwaring family, she knew. John the heir had sent out a version of the calamity to India: Captain Clanwaring had been quite as indignant as John, and at once wrote back his opinion of matters to Sir Dene. But, to see this fair aristocratic child, aristocratic in dress as in looks, sitting on Sir Dene's knee, fondled by him, and evidently at home at Beechhurst Dene, was something so entirely opposite to the ideas Lady Lydia had formed upon the affair, that she did not quite at once recover her equanimity.

"Does he—live here?" she asked in condemning amazement.

"Oh dear yes. He has no other home."

"Where's his mother, pray?"

"Tell where," said Sir Dene, to the intelligent, listening boy.

"Mamma's dead," said Tom. "She and papa went to heaven."

"Ay. They went within three months of each other; the same grave, hardly closed, received them both, Lady Lydia."

And to her ladyship's infinite astonishment, she saw that Sir Dene's eyes, bent on the little boy's head as he spoke, had filled with tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

GUESTS AT BEECHHURST DENE.

THE handsomest guest-chamber that Beechhurst Dene afforded, with a small cheerful sitting-room opening from it, had been assigned by the servants to Lady Lydia Clanwaring. The title sounded imposing in their ears. The heir's wife was really of better family, and an heiress to boot; but she was only plain Mrs. Clanwaring: Lady Lydia was Lady Lydia, and received homage accordingly.

The Lady Lydia Clanwaring was the daughter of a poor and obscure Irish peer; she had absolutely not a shilling of her own in the world. Her father, Mr. Riley, had succeeded to the title suddenly. Perhaps it was the long fight with poverty previously to that, that had rendered her so sharp in worldly interests, so mean in petty details, so grasping in everything where money was concerned. Mr. Riley had never expected to come to the title: when he did so his daughters were grown up: until then, they had all led a scrambling sort of life, their time passed in one long scuffle, trying to make both ends meet; sometimes in a remote corner of Ireland, sometimes in a cheap continental town. After his succession, the Earl was not much better off, for the estate, never worth much, had been impoverished until the income derived from it was of almost nominal value. One of Lydia Riley's sisters had married an officer in an Indian regiment. Lady Lydia went

out to stay with them, and there met Sir Dene's son, Lieutenant Clanwaring. Stationed in a quiet place where there was but little society, they were thrown much together, and one day Lieutenant Clanwaring made her an offer: or at least, what she chose to consider one; and in point of fact, he said more than he could in honour retract from. Be you very sure she did not let him retract. He would have laughed it off, but found he could not. He had never meant it, he said to himself: it had been said in thoughtlessness, in the incaution of the moment: but he had to abide by it. How very many more men, are there, who have been caught in a like manner! Mr. Clanwaring submitted to his fate with a good grace, and made no sign. Save for a word he let drop in Gander's hearing one night that he came to his father's rather shaky from the mess dinner, he never let it be known that the Lady Lydia was not his best choice. He was but a boy, barely of age: she was three or four years older in years, and half a century in depth. So they were married: and until now had lived together in India. Lady Lydia had had time to get heartily sick and tired of an Indian life, and of making the best of a narrow income. Sir Dene did not allow much to his youngest son: at the same age he, himself, had been obliged to make his pay suffice; and he thought it no hardship for his son to do it. Weary of it altogether, Lady Lydia determined to have a change. She told her husband that the time had come when it was necessary the children should go home, both for their health's sake and that their education should be entered upon. Captain Clanwaring agreed. He was tired of it, too: tired of his wife's fractiousness, and of the troublesome and noisy children. He wrote to his father, asking him to receive them for a time, until suitable schools should be fixed on: and Sir Dene acquiesced with pleasure. On this, the first night of their arrival, Lady Lydia told Sir Dene she should remain about a year in Europe visiting different friends in England and Ireland; and then return to her husband. In her private heart she cherished a very different plan—never to go back at all, but to establish her footing and her home at Beechhurst Dene. And if there was one woman more capable than most other women of carrying out her scheme persistently and bringing it to bear, that woman was the Lady Lydia Clanwaring.

All the way home, amidst the many months' discomfort of the sailing ship—there were no fleet steamers in those days—had she been nursing her eggs and reckoning her chickens. "Sir Dene has neither kith nor kin; he has no grandchild to make much of," she would repeat to herself, "for John Clanwaring and his wife do not go near Beechhurst Dene. The field lies open and clear for me. I will be the place's mistress: my children will be their grandfather's indulged pets and playthings."

But Lady Lydia, to her intense astonishment, found that Sir Dene

had a grandchild near him, located in his home, allowed to climb his knee at will, altogether made as much of as she had intended her own children should be. More especially had she cherished this intention for her elder son. He was beloved by her in that inordinate degree that mothers do sometimes love their children. It is said that like clings to like. Certain it was, this young Jarvis Clanwaring was remarkably like his mother, in person as in temper. He had the same pale, sharp face, the keen, restless black eyes, with the sly look in them; in disposition he had the same crafty depth, and the secretive, unpleasant temper. The younger one, Otto, was a dull plodding boy, worth ten of his brother—who put upon him always. From the moment Lady Lydia Clanwaring saw the child, Tom, on Sir Dene's knee, she resolved that he should lose his footing there if clever manœuvring could accomplish it.

She stood at the window of her bed-room the following morning, looking out on the early sun. Lady Lydia was by far too restless natured a woman to lie in bed late, even on the day following a tiring journey; she liked to be up and doing. She had just wound her coal-black hair in coils round her head, and was dressed all but her gown. The fine panorama of scenery lay beyond, with its green fields, its woods, its gleams of water, and its sprinkling of dwellings; Hurst Leet, the little village was near, the fair city of Worcester more distant: all pleasant things to look upon under the blue sky of the autumn morning. But to Lady Lydia they were as nothing. *She* looked with covetous eyes at the park beneath; at the lodge at the end of the avenue; at whatsoever pertained to Beechhurst Dene. "A grand old place," she repeated to herself, "and I'll reign here, its mistress."

The door opened, and she turned sharply round. It was Dovet, the maid: she had reddish hair, and eyes of a fine green, and wore a buff gingham gown with white frills, and was just as crafty as her mistress. Lady Lydia had lost no time. On the previous evening when she went upstairs to take off her things before supper, the vision of the fair child in his crimson velvet dress clouding her mind, she called Dovet, and charged her to find out all particulars attending the boy—how he came to be there at all, and why. Dovet liked nothing better than to ferret out secrets for herself or her mistress: to do her justice, she was in that respect a faithful servant.

"Well, Dovet," began Lady Lydia, "have you got at any of the circumstances?"

"I flatter myself that I have obtained a few, my lady," minced Dovet, who was as full of conceit and affectation as any fine dame of the day could be. "It was quite a error of judgment to have allowed the child to come here at all."

"The mother was a frightfully low person, I know."

"Oh, frightful low, my lady. They live at a farm near; quite working

people; an inferior set altogether. The girl was pretty, and Mr. Geoffry was drawn in to marry her one day when Sir Dene was safe away in London. A fine uproar there was over it. Sir Dene posted down from London with Mr. Clanwaring, and a aunt posted over in her carriage from somewhere nearer. They turned Mr. Geoffry out of the house; kicked him out, I believe, my lady; and he went off to lodgings with the girl. Sir Dene relented a little later, and let him live in a cottage on the estate and made him his servant as bailiff. The girl died when the child was born, and the day after she was interred, Mr. Geoffry came home here again (like his impudence, it seems to me, my lady) and brought the infant with him wrapped up in a shawl. And here the infant have been ever since."

Dovet had got her tale tolerably correct, you see. Fortune favoured her. An under housemaid, Patty, who was under orders to leave—through a quarrel with Susan Cole, in which Susan's part had been taken, and hers not, and in consequence of which Susan was just now worse to her than poison—had fallen in Dovet's way. In the woman's sore feeling she had put the worst colouring on the past, as connected with Geoffry Clanwaring and his wife, simply because Susan had been their servant. Revenge makes the best of us unjust.

"The girl's people live near, do they?" remarked Lady Lydia, when she had listened to what Dovet had to say.

"Quite close, my lady. It's a old farm-house, right opposite the back gates here, just across the lane. The little child is running there everlasting."

"Then why is it that the child cannot be with them altogether?" was Lady Lydia's indignant rejoinder.

"Why indeed, my lady!"

Lady Lydia said nothing further. Perhaps she thought all the more. That this low-born child, this interloper, should certainly lose his footing at Beechhurst Dene and be got out of it, she fully resolved. But she knew that she must proceed to work cautiously: feel her way, as it were. Very smooth and smiling was her face as she went down to breakfast.

"Will you allow me to preside, Sir Dene?" she asked, when her children were seated.

"I'm sure I wish you would—if you don't mind taking the trouble," heartily replied Sir Dene—who, averse to exertion himself, as many who have lived long in India are, had been about to tell Gander to stop and pour out the coffee. So Lady Lydia took her place at the table's head—and kept it for the future.

In came Susan Cole. "Is Master Tom to take his breakfast here this morning, Sir Dene?"

"What d'ye say?" cried Sir Dene, who had not caught the words, as he turned his head to the speaker.

"Master Tom is wanting to have his breakfast with you, Sir Dene. He knows, you see, sir, that the other children are here."

"To be sure : let him come by all means," was Sir Dene's answer. And the lady, busy with the coffee cups, did not like the glad and ready voice it was spoken in.

So Tom came. In a cotton frock this morning, with his clean round brown Holland blouse over it. Susan placed his chair at Sir Dene's elbow, and put down his basin of bread-and-milk.

"Go and say good morning to your cousins, my pretty one," said Sir Dene ; and my lady coughed a harsh and resentful cough at the word "cousins." Tom held out his little hand to them in succession : and each shook it in silence, staring at the boy as if he were a wild Indian. The children had not brought much manners with them. Then Susan lifted him into his seat ; and Sir Dene kissed him, and stroked his pretty hair.

It happened that Sir Dene had to go to Worcester that morning, to attend a public meeting. His phaeton came to the door at eleven o'clock. Lady Lydia stepped out to admire the fine horses.

"I want to go, ma," said Jarvis. "I *shall* go."

Lady Lydia appealed to Sir Dene with a sweet smile. "You will take him, will you not, Sir Dene."

"Can't to-day," replied Sir Dene. "Should not know what to do with him in Worcester."

The lady's face clouded—threatening signs of one of her ugly passions. "Oh, do indulge him this once, Sir Dene," pleaded the mother. "All is strange to him here as yet, poor dear little fellow."

But Sir Dene was not one to do a thing against his will. On the whole he was not fond of children—Tom excepted—and very much disliked to be put to any personal trouble with them.

"Very sorry, Lady Lydia, but I am going in on business. The meeting may last for hours : it would hardly do for—what's the lad's name—Jarvey—to be left in the streets. The coachman can drive them all out to-morrow."

Sir Dene got in, taking the reins, the groom stepped up beside him, and away they went. Master Jarvey's first move was to fling himself on his back on the gravel and kick and howl as if the deuce had got inside him. The words, please, are Gander's, who was looking on. His next was to spring on his feet, furiously tear up a handful of gravel and fling it after the carriage.

"*That's* nice bringings up," cried Susan Cole critically in Gander's ear.

"*Her* bringings up !" retorted Gander, with a side nod in the direction of Lady Lydia. "Don't think she knows much about that. One can't expect nothing from a pig but to grunt."

"You don't like her," remarked Susan. "No more don't I."

"I didn't like her in India, nor nobody else did: young Mr. Clanwaring in course excepted," added Gander, with a curious twist of the mouth. "And I don't like Dovet neither—birds of a feather, they be. Dovet had got her fox's nose inside my pantry this morning, whispering with Patty: I'd like to know the reason why."

Lady Lydia, smarting under the rebuff Sir Dene had given her boy, who was idolized by her as no other human being ever could or would be in this world, retired to her rooms in dudgeon, where Dovet proceeded to unpack, with Susan Cole to help. By and by, Lady Lydia put on her bonnet and shawl, and strolled out to the back entrance to look about her. Not a corner of the passages but she took it in with her observant eye; not a bush of shrubs outside, but she noted. Gander, coming to the door to shake a table-cloth, saw her with her nose flattened against the glass doors of Sir Dene's parlour, peering in. With independent ease, Gander did not seem in a hurry to retreat again; he leisurely stood and shook, and shook and stood.

"This seems to be quite a business-room, Gander," she remarked, stepping back. "What a quantity of papers lie about!"

"It is Sir Dene's business parlour, my lady."

"His business parlour! What has Sir Dene Clanwaring to do with business?"

"With a big estate like this, there's a host o' business to be transacted; a sight o' matters to be done. I know this much, my lady: it pretty nigh drives the master at times off his head. Dell, the bailiff—it's one he took on after poor Mr. Geoffry died—ain't o' much good, as it seems to me, for folks come up here all the same a pestering Sir Dene.—Where do them two paths lead to, you ask, my lady: why the one straight afore us goes direct to Harebell Lane: t'other on our right, the privet walk, 'll take you round to the front o' the house."

Lady Lydia, avoiding the privet walk, chose the straight one before her, and arrived at the gates opening to Harebell Lane. Remembering Dovet's words, she looked out for the Farm: but the opposite hedge was high, and hid it. She took her way up the lane on an exploring tour, and reached in time the Trailing Indian.

Two children—dirty little ragamuffins upon whom the Lady Lydia did not vouchsafe to cast a second glance—stood near, blowing alternately at a whistle. The one ran up to show it to her in his sociable nature.

"Isn't it nice? It's Emma's."

To Lady Lydia's unbounded astonishment, she recognised Tom. But Tom in unmitigated grief, so far as his clothes were concerned. In the busy state of the Dene that morning, and of Susan Cole, Tom, neglected and looked askance at by the Indian children, took the opportunity to run off, as usual, to Mrs. Owen's. In the lane, however, he was waylaid by Emma Geach, and that young lady seduced

him to stay and play with her. Companionship is sweet. Having tasted of it once, she was no doubt hankering after it again, and had come off surreptitiously to find Tom. It is always the women, we are assured, who seduce the men. Running up to the Trailing Indian in search of the whistle, which she had not brought out, Tom fell down by the pond, and plastered himself with green mud. Emma, by way of consoling him, fed him with blackberries, and—there he was, face, hands, hair, and pinafore, a picturesque compound of red, and green, and muddy disreputability. Lady Lydia turned her outraged eyes on the other child. An unmistakable ragamuffin, she, of the lowest type: clothes coarse, shabby, torn; toes out of shoes, socks down at heel.

"Is that your sister?" demanded Lady Lydia, her ideas somewhat confused.

"It's Emma," repeated Tom. "Grandpapa said Susan was to buy me a whistle like this, but Susan has not got time to-day."

Every nerve within her revolted at the word "grandpapa," as used, by this child, of Sir Dene. "Where does 'Emma' live?" she asked.

"I lives there," burst forth the girl, with all her native "stock," as she pointed to the Trailing Indian.

Lady Lydia cast her eyes on the inn, picked up her skirts, and walked on. "Low-lived little beast!" she exclaimed of Tom, not caring whether the road-side inn bore much relationship to him, or none. "And it is *this* child of disgraceful connections who has been allowed to get a footing at Beechhurst Dene!"

The high road, running crossways just beyond the Trailing Indian, did not seem to promise much of interest for Lady Lydia, and she turned back. The girl, Emma, had been called into the inn then, whistle and all, and the door shut. Tom, left alone, ran along by the side of Lady Lydia, unconscious that he was doing wrong: did she not belong to the Dene?

"What do you mean by following me?" she stopped to ask. "Why don't you go home?"

"I'm going to grandma's," said Tom. "It's down here. Mary Barber will wash me."

He spoke timidly. The angry face had a look in it that frightened him. Children have keen instincts, and Tom drew behind. At the turning of the lane he suddenly darted before her, and into the arms of a young man who was advancing. A gentle-faced pleasant young man, who wore working clothes. It was William Owen.

"Oh, Tom! what a mess you are in!" he cried—and then took off his hat to Lady Lydia as she passed.

Tom repeated that he was going to ask Mary Barber to "wash" him. Mr. Owen put him down, and told him to make haste about it.

"Who was that?" Lady Lydia condescended to question of Tom, when he came on.

"It was Uncle William," said the child. "He gave me a little boat one day."

Lady Lydia tossed her disdainful head. Uncle William!—a common working clodhopper! And this objectionable child, with the low connections and the low tastes and companionships, was allowed to call Sir Dene Clanwaring his grandfather, and to have his home at Beechhurst Dene!

The child—the offences of the morning condoned by Susan—appeared at dessert again in his costly velvet dress—only this time it was blue velvet instead of crimson. Susan Cole, in conjunction with Miss Reynolds, the noted mantua-maker on the Parade at Worcester, had been allowed to order attire for him after the pride of her own heart, unchecked by her master. It was with difficulty Lady Lydia kept her temper down to a decent show of tranquillity. She had assumed the head of the table, as she had at breakfast, sitting at the opposite end to Sir Dene. But the temper, bubbling up within her with strange fierceness, betrayed her into an incaution she was not often guilty of—that of speaking at the wrong time.

After the children were gone to bed, and she had been in the great drawing-room a long while alone, Sir Dene came in from the dinner-table. It was the custom in those days for gentlemen to drink a great deal of wine: Sir Dene did not exceed as some did; but he liked a generous glass. To-day, however, the reason of his tardy sitting was, that, fatigued with his tiresome meeting in the city, he had dropped asleep at the table. Lady Lydia, nursing her rage all that while at the prospect of what she was pleased to term her children's wrongs in having found a supplanter in Sir Dene's affections, was just in prime order, and entered at once upon the battle. Very quietly, softly, craftily, and tenderly—just as though she were a sweet angel of consideration, and had no interests in the world at heart, save Sir Dene's and Tom's.

Tom's sad connections were hinted at; Tom's over low predilections; Tom's vagabond state out of doors—as witness how and with whom she had found him that day. For such a child Beechhurst Dene was not a suitable home, she gently pointed out: and—would it not be better to send him to his grandmother Owen's?

"Send him to his grandmother Owen's?" repeated Sir Dene, when he had gathered what all this was driving at—and he spoke a little explosively, as it seemed to his wary listener. "Why what do you mean, my lady?"

"Even at the cost of having to pay a slight yearly sum for his maintenance. Dear Sir Dene, I only suggest it in the child's best interests."

"His interests can be taken better care of at Beechhurst Dene than they would be with his mother's family," returned the baronet. "You must be dreaming, Lady Lydia."

"I fear, unfortunately, that I am rather wider awake in regard to this matter than you can be, Sir Dene," she said, with the sweetest smile her face could put on. "Were the child to remain here, he would grow up with notions ridiculously unsuited to his future position."

"And what do you fancy his future position will be?" retorted Sir Dene, his temper getting up. "The child is my grandson, Lady Lydia: you don't suppose I shall turn him out in the world to follow the plough's tail, do you?"

"Oh, Sir Dene! the plough's tail!" she simpered.

"Well, Lady Lydia, what is it that you mean?" he asked.

And then, vexed in her turn, she said openly that the child ought never to have been at the Dene—ought to be sent from it without loss of time.

"Never, while I live and am master here, Lady Lydia," was the firm answer. "I gave my hand on it to my dear son, Geoffry."

"It is scarcely behaving fairly to your other sons, Sir Dene. To Mr. Clanwaring's well-born wife; to me. The young woman was so very obscure and low a person."

"She was one of the best and loveliest girls the world ever saw—I can tell you that, my lady," returned Sir Dene, in choler.

"But so very low, I say. Were her friends not able or willing to receive the child he should have been sent to the parish. It is really not *becoming* to have him here—and to make much of him as though he were a son of the house. Pardon me, dear Sir Dene, I am only speaking in all our interests, his included."

"Very likely you are, my lady: but as your notions and mine don't agree in this, the subject may be dropped. Geoffry was my favourite son: and this little son of his has taken his place in my home."

Sir Dene rang the bell as he spoke—a loud peal that startled Gander. Susan Cole was wanted.

"What is this I hear?" thundered Sir Dene when she appeared. "That you suffer Master Clanwaring to run wild in the lanes and play with any vagabond child he may pick up! Take you better care of him in future, Susan Cole: or else you may cut your service short at the Dene."

And the Lady Lydia, smoothing her fingers over her cambric handkerchief at the fire, found she had spoken somewhat too soon. Her rebellious heart rose up within her, and had to be forcibly controlled to silence. "Master Clanwaring!"

(To be continued.)

GIVING AWAY.

NO one will be inclined to deny the importance of the great question of charity. It is a matter upon which all sober people must occasionally at any rate, bestow some thought. And there are certain times and seasons when we are more especially inclined to give it serious attention. A national calamity ; unusual and wide-spread cases of distress and poverty ; a terrible failure in a gigantic charitable scheme : something or other of this description is certain now and then to rise up and cause our minds to ponder the subject well in its different bearings.

We can all give some thought to it ; but they are few, comparatively speaking, who are able also to give it time and attention ; to make it one of the purposes of their lives ; so that in this matter, as in others, they shall leave the world better, for their own individual exertions, than they found it.

And, of those who do accord to it time and thought and attention, how many bring strength of capability and judgment to bear upon their work ? How many are not carried away by an undue softness of heart ? or by a disinclination to enquire into things, the result of inertness ? or by a notion that giving away money *must* be charity, and cannot ever be a mistake, or do harm ? If we were to sift these numbers, as to their fitness to be personal donors, it is to be feared the result would be as in some competitive examinations : first take ten out of the thousand, and then select two out of the ten.

Charity is enjoined upon us. No one will deny that. The laws of God and man alike demand its exercise : "give freely, and without grudging." These words, written 1800 years ago, hold good to-day, and will to the end. But at the same time we are to give wisely. And if neither wisdom nor discretion is brought to bear, our alms will run the risk of doing a great deal more harm than good.

Charity is charity only so long as it relieves real distress. When it ceases to do this, it ceases to be charity. Many people wish to do good. They give away money because they feel that they ought to do it, and that if they neglect the duty, it may not be well with them at the last ; but they are too often content with the wish and the action ; and never trouble themselves to ascertain further. For this reason perhaps, nothing is more certain than that a great deal of the charity given away, is the cause of very much of the idleness and vagabondism existing, and of the evil and distress that must of necessity follow in their train.

I would not say one word to lessen the charity of England ; to diminish the love that exists in the hearts of men towards their fellows, prompting them to acts of goodness and benevolence ; but I would most strongly urge upon every one the necessity of care and prudence and

enquiry in giving away money: as much care and prudence in this, as a man of business would exercise in the pursuit of any serious branch of his affairs.

If all would do this to the best of their ability, we should hear less of the heartrending scenes of poverty and distress that so often play havoc with the more sensitive parts of our nature; the records of crime in our prison calendars would be lessened; emigration would not be the necessity it now is: and—what will more nearly tell home to many—we should certainly have fewer poor's rates to pay. For the amount of poor's rates now coming in to us annually, is little short of a disgrace to a civilized country. Nay, it is almost alarming; for if England is to go on like this year after year, from bad to worse; her taxes for the poor gradually and steadily increasing, as they are; it would seem that what we have heard of the flourishing state of the country; the wealth of the nation, the prosperity of commerce—phrases that for generations have been household words with us, almost proverbs—will in reality become mere empty terms; leaving behind them nothing but a sound and a shadow of glories that have passed away. I do not say that charity will be alone to blame for all this. The events of the past ten years, alas, too sadly prove the contrary; but there is no doubt that charity—or rather the miscarriage of charity—will have been one of the great promoters of a state of things that ought never to have existed. And therefore it is impossible to speak in terms too strong, to utter warnings too solemn, or to give censures too severe against the indiscriminate and unwise use of false charity.

Let me repeat—I would not seek to lessen the impulse of true charity in the heart of any man: I would not for worlds stay the hand stretched forth to help. On the contrary; would I rather say to all who can afford it, give this year, or next year, twice the amount you have ever given before. Give it freely, and openly, and generously, and receive back into your conscience repayment a thousand-fold; but see that you give it wisely. Take care that what you give fulfils its object: that it goes into proper channels, and does *not*, as is now too often the case, foster indolence and encourage vice.

Of one thing we may be sure: the necessity for real charity will exist as long as the world shall last. God has implanted this greatest of the Christian virtues within the heart, and will never leave it to starve for want of food. In this world there must always be the poor as well as the rich: and by "the poor," I mean that portion of humanity that, but for the rich, would die of cold, and hunger, and wretchedness. This is partly the result of the fall and its curse; but I believe it would exist, if for no other reason, to give God's people an opportunity of showing and proving their love and gratitude to Him, for all His wonderful care and goodness. "The poor ye have with you always." And it is to these, and to such as these, that our help should be given.

There is one thing to be said on the other side. That even as in this world nothing is perfect, so the administration of charity can never be perfect. But we can strive after amendment, and we can do our best.

Then again, where a body of men—a corporation if you like to call it so—is mixed up in a work—especially a work of charity—there is certain to be confusion and quarrelling and waste; if not worse. Dickens, who had looked into these matters and well considered them, showed up some of the workhouses; but only to a certain extent. He could not go beyond a fixed point. But he went far enough to reveal to the world some of the abuses it had to contribute to maintain.

Not long ago the writer can tell of a man who got upon the Board of one of our most important Metropolitan Workhouses. He had a little spare time to devote to these matters; he wished to do some good, and he was determined to do it. He possessed a heart and a conscience; some sound common sense; and, what was especially fortunate in this instance, a strong and determined will. If the reader would like a little further description, it may be added that he was a big, stout man, with a florid, kind, good-humoured face: one of those men you trust as soon as you see them.

Well, he got on the Board. He saw abuses going on; practised by the very Guardians themselves; things that he thoroughly disapproved of, and that he did not scruple to call by their right names: and he spoke of them openly. He saw that this change and that change would be for the better; and he said that it must be done. He did not hesitate to tell his colleagues that they all had a duty to perform, and that those who could not perform it ought to retire.

And, before long, every member of that board, I believe without exception, was more energetic in his endeavours to get this man turned out, than ever he had been in looking after the interests and welfare of the workhouse. He had come to destroy their peace; to disturb their consciences; to see that things should be done as they ought to be done; and they must get rid of him.

It is often, where, for instance, a large sum is left to charity; to be expended as a certain number of people think best; a case of the very homely, but true saying of the broth being spoilt by too many cooks. Where many persons have a voice in a matter, there will always be a great amount of talking: considerably more talking than work. Every one has something to say; each one naturally thinks his own something the most important of all: not on any account must it be left unsaid. So that after all the Charity Committee becomes little better than a debating club. One man might have succeeded in doing some work, and doing it well; but twenty must first of all be occupied in asserting their own individual dignity and superior wisdom, and this takes up the time. So the steed starves, or gets only half his portion of hay: and the object for which the large sum was left has been thwarted, and much

of the money wasted. It would be far better to leave money with fixed rules for its disposal, even if it were only an asylum for cats and dogs, than to leave it in the hands of a number of men, and entirely at their mercy and disposal. They no doubt go to their task with excellent intentions ; but the funds may be so wasted in dispute and thence in litigation, that, like the Kilkenny cats, the combat will cease only with annihilation of men and money.

Just now the question of charity is largely occupying the public mind. And in many ways it has been vividly and powerfully brought before us. England, people say, is the most charitable country in the world, just as it is the richest. Our late experiences would seem to prove it. In no other land, it may be safely affirmed, would such subscriptions have been collected together in so short a time, as England has collected for the French and German sick and wounded, the Parisians, and the French peasantry. Day after day sums were advertised that astonished people with their magnitude, and which proved that the spirit of charity is amongst us as strongly as ever.

And perhaps it is this that has raised a doubt and a question as to what is the best way of doing most good in this bestowal of alms. Men and women are asking it of one another as they never asked before ; more thoughtfully, more anxiously and earnestly.

Charity does not consist in the mere giving away of money. It consists also of sympathy, and of the many forms in which sympathy is expressed. But this is individual and concerns only the person offering it. Kind words cannot hurt ; but money may do harm, as well as good. One great misfortune is the extreme difficulty that exists in finding out the really deserving poor. Those who thrust themselves prominently forward ; who take care that they shall be seen plainly and heard loudly ; are as a rule undeserving of assistance. They may be in distress, but idleness has most likely brought them to it ; and they would rather go on in this state of existence, begging their bread, and appealing to public sympathy, than earn their livelihood by honest labour. They do vast harm, these semi-impostors : for they take up the alms that are wanted by the really necessitous ; and when their worthlessness is found out, John Bull is angry and buttons up his coins. A man who is often imposed upon grows hard at last. He is apt to think every fresh case he hears of nothing but one of fresh deceit ; and he gets to undraw the purse strings but on rare occasions—a collection at church, or a national subscription.

Of course this ought not so to be. It is punishing the just for the unjust on one side ; on the other a man becomes close and hard where he ought only to have been cautious and prudent. One who allows himself to be often taken in is little less to blame than the knave who imposes upon him. There are certain occasions of course where the wariest of us are deceived ; but as a rule a little trouble, and certainly a little experience will enable us to detect fraud.

But—no man should allow his heart to grow callous because he has been once in a way deceived. On the contrary, he may look out for imposition and expect it, just as now and again we meet a counterfeit coin amidst the true metal. Sometimes it will be as difficult to detect the imposture as to single out the false coin from the real. In all things there is a negative and positive; there will always be good and bad; perfect and imperfect; everything real is imitated. Therefore if we are wise we shall be on guard against imposition; but not be disheartened though it now and then get the better of us.

Real poverty and real cases of distress, are, it must be repeated, as a rule hard to find out. People who are really in misfortunes do not trumpet their woes aloud in the market-place. They are ashamed to beg; they are bowed down with humility, crushed with sorrow; they have never had to ask before; and they don't like to begin now, and don't know how to set about it. They are not too proud to accept help; on the contrary, they will do so thankfully and gratefully; but they cannot seek it: they must be sought out themselves. And it is this latter seeking out that is so difficult.

Every one has not the gift. It would be as impossible for some people to go about and find out the deserving poor, and talk to them and relieve them, as it would be for a simple plough-boy to work out a proposition in Euclid. With the best intentions in the world, these people would only do harm: in fact they could not attempt to do it at all. They can only give. And it is all they are called upon to do: all that God will ever demand at their hands, or He would not have denied them the talent. As long as the world lasts there will always be givers and seekers: and the givers should see that the seekers are never without means to relieve the distress they look for. As it is, how often you hear these missionaries exclaim: If I only had more money, how much good I could do with it! how much it is wanted! They are not kept properly supplied with funds, though if the rest of us did what we ought, there would be funds in abundance, and to spare.

"It is the few that give," remarked a friend one day; "not the many." And looking at one's experience, it is to be feared that this is often the case. In a parish, you frequently find that a few, a very few, give liberally; whilst the greater portion either don't give at all, or to a very limited extent. They seem to think it no concern of theirs. They are not called upon to help. It is quite enough for them to pay their way, and keep up their own position and—perhaps put by. And this especially applies to London; far more so than to small towns and villages where there exists more of a home feeling than can ever spring up amidst a population of three or four millions. There we know everyone, by sight if not personally; we are more in the position of one great family; everybody is literally a neighbour; and we feel bound to help wherever exceptional misery shows itself. In London, a great

deal of the giving away is prompted by a sense of duty only. The mere feeling of obligation is not the highest motive that can influence men ; but it is a very prevalent one, and if everyone would listen to and act upon it, less would be heard of misery and poverty. And, a strict sense of duty would act for good in other ways also. It would for one thing prevent much of that waste that exists in the houses of the rich. It has been calculated that this waste alone, going on in London houses, would more than feed all the town's hungry poor. Thus the rich, without self-denial, without effort, without additional expenditure, might relieve much of the abounding distress : though of course some organization and system would be necessary.

And if this is true, what sort of a responsibility are those incurring, who allow this waste to go on month after month, and year after year ?

Why don't they do it, may be asked. Simply because they are taken up and absorbed with the cares and pleasures of the world : and there'd be the trouble. The very fact of their abundant wealth destroys their sympathy. Human nature feels most those things which most nearly affect it. Riches cannot realize or imagine poverty and its evils. A man in strong, robust health, cannot by any possibility put himself in imagination in the position of another dying of some wasting malady. One with a wonderful love for music or painting can scarcely understand that there exist people with no ear for the one, no eye for the other. It is as a rule only where things touch and affect ourselves—come home to us in a measure, and assimilate with us—that we can enter largely into them.

This is one reason why the poor are the friends of the poor—a saying as old and true as the Flood. The poor could not get on without the poor. It is because they know so well each others' cares, and sorrows, and privations. And with all their ignorance, with all the evil influence around, we often find in these poor far more of the spirit and life of Christ, than in those who from their birth have been clothed in purple and fine linen, and had lavished upon them every advantage of care, refinement, and education.

This carelessness, and the indifference it engenders, is one of the great and crying evils of the day. To be somewhat less taken up with our own cares and pursuits ; to spare a little more attention—and it would require but a little from each—to bestow upon others, would make all the difference, and set much right that is now wrong. And until we can bring about some change of this sort, there will always be a work to do that cannot be accomplished.

Riches are a great responsibility ; and only in proportion as men fulfil their responsibilities must they look for a blessing upon themselves and their work. "No man liveth to himself." This is true of everyone that ever came into the world. Each one by his life and conduct is consciously and unconsciously influencing the life of another or others :

and though, like the seed that is put into the ground, it may not at first be seen, it will eventually spring forth and bear fruit for good or ill, thirty, fifty, or a hundred fold. And the influence of some men is so great, that they can scarcely give a look, or stir a step, or speak a word, without exercising it.

Give, then ; freely, with a good heart ; to the best of your means. God is no man's debtor ; be sure you will never be the poorer for it : though don't give hoping for a reward in this world. But give wisely and discriminately ; take care, as far as you possibly can, to *know* that it will do good : that your money is not going to the encouragement of idleness, and beggary, and vice. There is so much real distress in the world, especially at this present moment, that there is no fear of your having more money to spend than ways to spend it in.

"That which is worth doing at all, is worth doing well." A saying that it would be good for man never to lose sight of ; and the more especially in the matter of alms-giving.



THE LAST LEAF.

From THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

IN the forest, lone as grief,
Nought is left upon the bough—
Nought but one forgotten leaf,
One singing bird—'tis silent now.

In my soul there stays behind
One loving thought for me to tell,—
To tell, but ah ! this bitter wind
Would bear it like a passing bell !

The leaf has fallen, the bird has flown,
And love died out on a winter's e'en ;
Little bird, come to my tomb alone,
And sing when the tree again is green !

H. CURWEN.

DISILLUSION.

I.

ONLY in France, in charming Brittany, are there hidden places where men may live on and on in almost fairy-like seclusion, because the surges of the great life-stream cannot reach them. Scarce one far-off murmur of the waves, like the rustle of forest tree-tops, finds its way to their repose. In these small and great castles, built in the style of the Renaissance—these marvellous structures, entwined and overgrown with green, like Thornrose's place of slumber—such as the hand of Gustave Doré has portrayed for us, far from the dusty marts of traffic, the dwellers remain, from generation to generation, as undisturbed by the outside world, as unabated in their strength, as quaint and peculiar in their ways, as old wine in well-closed cellars. There we find forms, which, by their strangeness when compared with everyday people, entice from us a smile or a tear, something like discovered relics of the beloved dead.

In just such a retired little castle still lived, at the beginning of this century, the impoverished Marquis de Bridal, lord of the small village which wound along the seam of the forest. His father had once played a great rôle at the court of Louis XV., and he himself, in spite of his whitening hair, had fallen desperately in love with the beautiful Austrian, Marie Antoinette. He would no doubt have done very many foolish things for her sake, had not circumstances obliged him to retire for life to his little castle in Brittany.

There, year out and year in, lived his gentle, lovely marchioness, in her voluntary banishment, the friend and helper of all the poor around her.

The daughter of an old but impoverished race, her name Veronica, she had first met the marquis at a country *fête*, and, by her grace and innocence, fascinated, his then unoccupied heart. Like an elf she had flitted past him among the dancers, and her voice was as the tone of silver bells, as she, chosen queen of the festival, sang these words:

" Ah ! my handsome fellows,
Do not think of me ;
By this ring of silver,
Yours I may not be !"

She sang with such girlish defiance and so charmingly, that a sudden wish arose in the heart of the Marquis de Bridal to entice from those fresh, rosy lips, the confession " I may be only yours."

But when she really became his wife, and he took her to Paris, he learned only too soon that every flower pertains to the soil where it has grown—the rose to the garden, the wood-flower amid the leafy shadows,

the meadow-blossom to the grass, the field-flower to the hedge. The hot turbulence of Parisian life was not suited to this tender woman. Veronica had appeared beautiful to the marquis amid her rural surroundings; now he found her scarcely pretty; and, beside, so timid, that every waiting-maid, in confidence of manner, put the lady marchioness to shame.

Then, happily, he thought of his little castle in Brittany, and there one lovely spring day he took his young wife, and asked her if she would not rather live in this rural home than in Paris. With the happiest smile she threw her arms around his neck, and begged him to let her remain there always. With a lightened heart, he granted her wish, and in the autumn returned alone to Paris. From that hour his wife saw him for only a few weeks in the summer season, and they became more and more like strangers to each other. The brief presence of the marquis brought only an unquiet change into the silent life of the marchioness, as a wind-gust passing over the mirror of a peaceful lake raises the smooth surface into waves.

When the master of the castle was at home, the pastor's visits became less frequent. He knew that the marquis was not like his wife, given to grave historical studies, and that his services as reader would be in small demand. The only invitations he received were to an occasional game of chess.

The blue eyes of the young priest shed a mild radiance around the solitary life of Veronica, whose husband had entered upon as merry a life at the court of Versailles as if there were no Marchioness de Bridal in the world. If Père François was near, she never felt herself forsaken, and he was a good man: and even her ardent longing for the voice and smile of a child was unfelt as he talked with her: unrolling before her the history of nations and individuals, upon every leaf of which she read struggle, renunciation, sorrow, tears, and death.

His voice was the gentlest in the world, and the Marchioness de Bridal often let her work fall into her lap, and gazed dreamily into the pale, noble face of the reader with the thoughtful brow, and the light trace of sorrow upon the finely-cut lips. How sweet it must be to live so quietly, so at peace with one's self and the world! How her own heart still found it more and more bitter to renounce! Though she had never loved her husband with that love which is called "the crown of life," and in her union with him had fulfilled the last wish of a dying father, she still regarded him as her support and stay, and, poor ivy-vine! felt herself helpless in being thus forsaken by him. But in Père François, she had found a firm prop, the warm hand of a brother; which she grasped with eager joy and thankfulness, knowing that it would securely guide her to all good.

Père François knew how to busy her intellect, and her education—so much neglected—left a wide field for culture. How astonished she

was at the treasures of his knowledge, at the seriousness of his aims, and what a teachable pupil she became! Her soul was wonderfully lifted up as she conversed with her spiritual friend upon religion, which, like a sunbeam into a flower-chalice, fell into her pure heart.

He went with her to the abodes of the sick and poor; he first taught her how much better it is to give than to receive. She soon became revered like a saint—this Marchioness de Bridal—who lifted up bowed hearts by the loving, melancholy glance of her eyes, and the sweet tones of her voice.

Thus, year after year went by, and the lady's secret and most ardent wish was fulfilled at last. A rosy little girl came, and brought a gleam of purest bliss into that gloomy old castle of Brittany. Mother-joy shed a glow as of transfiguration over Veronica's pale face, and the eyes of her friends would often rest wonderingly upon her. Even the marquis, who came over from Paris to the christening of little Marion, was so surprised at his wife's appearance, at her beauty, as she advanced to meet him with the child in her arms, that before he left he proposed that Veronica should pass the next winter with him in Paris.

How charming was the laugh with which, in the fulness of her happiness, she declined his offer!

The presence of a child changes a whole house. No dark corner remains within it—no idle hand! Oh! there was so much to love and admire in this child—the young mother thought—from the delicate little fingers to the lighting up of the child-eyes, and the first indescribably sweet baby-syllable! The pastor expressed his admiration most eloquently; and the little lady of the castle, whom they had named Marion, after the manner of children, fully repaid love with love, crowed as she gazed into that grave, manly face, and seemed to divide her heart between Père François and her mother. But at the rare and brief visits of her father, the little one remained shy, and hid her tiny face in the folds of her mother's dress. The marquis laughed at this. He had no special pleasure in the child—he had wished for a son.

So the little one grew up—treasured and guarded as a flower, and the garden of her childhood was a sunny Eden, over which hung the eternally blue sky.

One day—Marion had just completed her fifth year—the marchioness, trembling and deathly pale, sought the Père François. She showed him a letter from a strange hand, in which she was implored to hasten to Paris, as the Marquis de Bridal had been dangerously wounded in a duel.

"You do not need my advice," said the pastor, gently, as he read the letter and met the questioning glance of Veronica's eyes. "You know the way wherein you must go, my friend."

"Yes," she whispered, "I know all that: I leave my child in your protection."

He made the sign of the cross upon her bowed forehead, inwardly praying that she might be kept from harm.

The same night, to the astonishment of the whole village, the marchioness set out for Paris. Many months passed ere she returned. And then she did not come alone to her beloved asylum: the marquis accompanied her, never more to leave. Through her unselfish, unremitting care, she had rescued her husband from death—but it was at the sacrifice of her own health.

Upon arriving in Paris, she had found him unconscious. How strange the chamber of this man, sick unto death, appeared to her! It was the fantastically adorned abode of an elegant man of the world; a *roué*, a bachelor. The furniture was magnificent, and upon the walls hung portraits of several danseuses, in the boldest attitudes. Romances were scattered over the tables; there were vases with artificial flowers in every corner; those weary, sorrowful eyes vainly sought for an oratory—a mass-book. The nurses whom she found there did not spare her. They told her plainly enough that the Marquis de Bridal would, in all probability, atone with his life for his passion for the renowned dancer, Mademoiselle Deligny. The physicians gave but slight hope—the right arm had been shattered by a pistol shot.

Very often, in the delirium of fever, the sick man would repeat the beloved name with passionate tenderness, and, with wild fury, challenge his happy rival to the combat. The marchioness, white and patient, sat day and night by his bedside, and before the mild lustre of her eyes the dark shadow of death slowly vanished. The marquis recovered—but the arm remained palsied for ever. The life in Paris was of necessity at an end. At his request the furniture of his apartment was removed to Brittany. He packed the pictures, those of the dancing girls, with his own hand. No word as to the occasion of his illness was ever exchanged between him and his wife: she did not once mention the name of Mademoiselle Deligny. As the time went on he began to realize that there was something truly wonderful in the devotion of his wife. He at once broke off all connection with Paris, and none of his friends there would have recognized in the man who now looked after his little estate in this remote corner of the world, the once gay gentleman of fashion.

One only passion had he secretly brought with him into this voluntary banishment—the passion for the dance and its representatives. He had them arranged in chronological order—the portraits of these charming French dancing-women, at whose bewilderingly fantastic forms little Marion often gazed in rapture. Nearest his arm-chair, at the right, hung the wondrously beautiful Capuis de Camarge, who had turned the head of Voltaire himself. Then came the voluptuous Prévost; the locksmith's fascinating daughter, Petitpas; the elegant Marie Salle; the enchanting Allard, the beloved of the Duke de Mazarin; the Roland;

the Cachoïs; the bewitching sisters Cheigny; and, last of all, surrounded by a wreath of artificial roses, the portrait of Loyal's piquant little pupil, Mademoiselle Deligny.

How often he told his listening child of these elves, whose little feet would bend no blade of grass, and described to her the ballets and *fêtes* of Paris! He would tell such fabulous things of the beauty of Mademoiselle Deligny, that one day his little daughter very seriously asked: "Do you believe, papa, that she is as beautiful as mamma?"

There was something like a tremor in his voice as he answered: "Quite otherwise, my child; quite otherwise."

"Why did you not bring her with you to play with me?"

A strange smile glided over the face of the Marquis de Bridal, and his reply had a changed tone. "My house is too poor to receive her, Marion. A king's roof is not worthy to overarch beauty and grace such as hers."

Marion learned to dance, taught by her father. He gave himself no trouble about her education in other respects—leaving this to the marchioness and Père François. He declared that he had no time. When he was not walking outside in the park or the fields, he would shut himself in his room, under the pretext of grave studies; but old Jean, who sometimes peeped through the keyhole—out of anxiety, he said—declared that he had seen his master hopping around in his stocking-feet, and taking the strangest attitudes. There was much laughter in the village because the gracious master had music played at haymaking, and wanted to see the work go by tune, which had hitherto been allotted by lot or by rewards. The workmen obstinately opposed him. Some even went so far as to declare that the master was not quite right in the head. He had something to say in regard to the carriage of every one in the house, and, to the astonishment of Père François, found especial fault with the steps of his own reverend self. There was also much to blame in Veronica's gait, he thought: she seemed so very weary when she walked.

Ah! she was weary—weary even unto death! That stealthy, delusive, creeping illness of which her own mother had died, had already seized upon her, but with heroic courage she struggled against the wasting footsteps of the malady. She would so gladly have lived for her child's sake, who would need her—oh, she felt it plainly!

Marion must now in her stead accompany the pastor to the poor and the sick. The marchioness filled the child's hands; and the little one learned what she herself had learned before, that giving is the best satisfaction for a woman's heart.

No one could be more regardless of worldly goods than the daughter of the Marquis de Bridal. She showed no great pleasure in books, but Père François discovered an unusual talent for drawing in his little pupil. He let her draw to her heart's content, while he read French

history to her. Père François understood scarcely more of drawing than his young pupil of history, and so this really great talent remained undeveloped. The mother's eye was delighted with these efforts of her child ; she sat always by, pale and weary, in the room with its charming bay window, from which graceful vines wound up from the window-ledge and lost themselves in the vaulted ceiling. Near the arm-chair of the marchioness, stood her kneeling-stool, of wonderfully carved work. But ever more white and slender became the hand which reached out for the red velvet prayer-book that lay on the desk.

In spring and summer the chair was rolled out to the terrace. Ah, this was a dangerous place for lesson hours ! Unwittingly the eye would ever wander over the flower-beds of the garden, that playground of the butterflies, and up into the crowns of the ancient trees ; and the ear would listen to the many-voiced twitter of the birds. It not seldom happened that the child's place all at once became vacant, while Père François, absorbed in his history, read on unheeding : and Marion's bright dress would be fluttering far away among the bushes. The little fugitive would return with glowing cheeks and dishevelled curls, but no one chided her. Only when the history told of handsome, knightly King Francis, no matter how splendid the summer weather, Marion did not run away ; although the good pastor skipped many pages in the book, and often hesitated, the young girl showed so much interest that she would beg him to read again the enchanting tale.

While this silent life was going on in the castle, Paris had ceased to be the laughing, brilliant Paris of old ; the Spirit of Revolution glided over its streets and pleasant places, the heavens grew dark—the time of the Reign of Terror drew nearer and nearer.

Now and then came one or another of the nobility of Brittany on short visits to the castle—people who lived just as solitary as the Marquis de Bridal himself. With such guests came sometimes nearer tidings of that storm-cloud hanging over the capital, and of the hollow blasts which shook that soil upon which rose the throne of the King of France.

And all the newspapers contained fabulous reports, and the pastor's face became whiter and whiter as he brought these sheets, and the marquis wrote letter after letter to Paris, but no answer came. With wide-open eyes and an expression of terror Marion listened, kneeling near her mother's chair, when Père François read the news which she only half understood ; for, that a people could rise against a real king who still wore a crown, and against such a beautiful queen, whose picture in papa's chamber hung right under the portrait of Mademoiselle Deligny, she could not comprehend.

"All sorrow passes over," whispered the marchioness, with a melancholy smile, "and every one in this life bears his secret sorrow, the queen as well as the beggar ; but it just passes over, like a shadow."

Ah, *she* became day by day more shadow-like—she herself was about

to "pass over"—the noble lady. He scarce left her side, the true friend. He was ever at hand to whisper of consolation; of the beautiful life after this life. The marquis never remained long in the sick chamber or near his wife's arm-chair—he belonged to those men who shrink in terror from suffering, even as many shrink from a thunder-storm. He privately thanked the pastor for his unwearied attendance: and so he left her to him and to Marion.

An hour came—the nightingales sang, the rose-buds were just opening—when the Marchioness de Bridal breathed out her gentle life, silent and resigned. Her last entreaty was to her friend. "Guard my child," she whispered. "I know you will take care of her and love her. I die in peace!"

He laid his trembling hand upon the forehead already cold with the dew of death, and before his tear-dimmed eyes the world sank into nothingness, and the sun's light went out, as his lips murmured the prayers for the dying.

Marion lay half-unconscious at the foot of the couch, and held fast the left hand of her dying mother. And Jean ran into the marquis's chamber, for the first time disregarding the strict etiquette exacted by his master, and bursting open the door, "My lady, the marchioness, implores——"

"Shameless fellow!" exclaimed the marquis, passionately confronting him—"who has permitted you to interrupt me?"

He held in his hand a little shoe of rose-red satin. A box of artistically wrought workmanship stood open on the table; knots of ribbon, gold spangles, flower-wreaths of faded colours, lay around in gay disorder.

"What does your lady the marchioness wish at this hour?" demanded the marquis, his face glowing with anger.

"She wishes—to die!" stammered Jean, drawing back in terror.

And the marquis found her already dead when he came to her—after he had thrown the little shoe from him, as if it had been fire in his hands. Spell-bound, he gazed into the face of that glorified one, which even in death had not lost its expression of forgiving goodness.

II.

YEARS had gone by since that dark day. There were many changes in the castle of the Marquis de Bridal. The giant waves of the Revolution had rolled over his house, as well as over France, and washed away most of his small possessions. Nothing of his fortune remained to him save this solitary abode, a few old, true servants, and his daughter Marion.

At first, the marquis had despairingly fought against poverty, as against a too narrow dress; but it grasped him firmly in his iron hands;

and so he came to endure it almost as we suffer death, helplessly, and in dumb anguish. He now lived in his room, with the Parisian furniture, which had really become very much faded. As formerly, he adhered to a strict division of his time; daily hung the pictures of his darlings in other positions for a change, and kept up his secret practice in dancing. People said he was out of his mind. Only he had chosen another hour in the day for this practice, since Jean had summoned him to the dying marchioness. Oh, what a wasted life was his!

The Marquis de Bridal had never been a gourmand—and he did not lose his temper when he saw his table set with the simplest fare. The old Sèvres-service was still there, as also the silver-plates stamped with the arms of his house; and from these they ate. His daughter's toilet gave him no expense: she managed it herself: the priest cared for her instructions; *he* only gave her dancing lessons. He was enraptured with Marion's grace and docility in all ways; and he especially admired her dancing.

"Oh, if Mademoiselle Deligny could see you dance, how she would praise you!" he exclaimed one day in ecstasy. "When we get rich again, Marion, we will go to Paris, and you shall see and admire that woman, who has the smallest foot in the world!"

"The smallest!" asked Marion, incredulously.

The Marquis de Bridal now showed his daughter for the first time the little, rose-red, satin shoe, that he had guarded jealously and treasured fondly. "Mademoiselle Deligny has worn it," he said, a little hesitatingly.

The young girl, laughing, put on the shoe.

"Oh, papa, it is too wide for me! and it would have been much too wide for mamma," she added. "Mamma's foot was an inch smaller than mine."

The marquis fixed a glance of terror upon the little foot of his daughter, and then sank into deep reflection.

Had his wife really had a smaller foot than that incomparable sylphide, who had once worn this rose-coloured shoe? It was very strange that he had never remarked it.

And the charming shoe no longer appeared to him so very little.

Often the marquis wondered that the newspapers did not now, as formerly, make mention of that matchless being; and it was with a double resentment that he thought of that impious Revolution. It had not only laid its rough hand upon the sacred heads of the royal pair, and swept away his own possessions; but it had allowed the greatest of all enchantresses to sink into oblivion. An enchantress whom he himself never would or could forget—the charming Mademoiselle Deligny.

Least of all could he comprehend how Paris could so have changed. All he read seemed like a horrible fiction.

"It cannot be; they lie, these miserable newspaper writers," he would

cry. "All dead and banished ; king and queen beheaded ; the dauphin tortured to death ; mademoiselle exiled ; the aristocracy executed by the guillotine, or wandering in foreign lands. Surely it can never all be !"

The marquis wrote to Mademoiselle Deligny—to one and another friend of his gay and happy days—but all letters remained unanswered. Suddenly, the remembrance of a boon companion in many follies came back to him—Gilbert Lecomte, the merry painter. Might he not be the best teacher for Marion, whose talent Père François was so incessantly urging him to have cultivated ?

"Come to my enchanted castle, to my forest solitude, O wild companion of wild adventures !" wrote the Marquis de Bridal to Monsieur Lecomte, "and let us talk of former times. I feel myself forsaken ; the best wife on earth, the Marchioness de Bridal, is dead ; and my daughter is a young, childish thing ; but the pastor plays a very good game of chess, and you know that I could never patiently endure being beaten. They say my Marion has a talent for painting. I would like to have you confirm the truth of this assertion. She might be your scholar, and you could be my guest as long as it pleased you to remain with me. It will be a diversion for us all, and perhaps a means of health for you. What can the Paris of to-day offer you ? And though you find only the household of an impoverished nobleman, you will still find warm hearts and good manners ; and Marion is a pretty butterfly, who would drive away care from a misanthrope. She dances with wonderful grace, and often reminds me of our mutual goddess, the bewitching Deligny. Ah, Lecomte ! to see *her* once more would make me young again. Has she caught the little corporal in her net ? Do you remember how he swore that her foot was the smallest in the world ? It embarrasses me to be obliged to confess to you that I have known two women with smaller—the poor Marchioness de Bridal and my daughter."

Instead of the written answer so much longed for, and which did not come ; there arrived at the castle some months later a very pleasing, handsome young man, who announced himself as Gilbert Lecomte. At the mention of this name, the marquis uttered a loud cry, and ran with outstretched arms, as rapidly as his growing infirmities would permit. For he did not remain always young, this marquis, any more than do other people. He did not recognise him : it was not the Gilbert Lecomte he had known, but his son. The father had long been dead.

Still the marquis held his guest in high honour. The young painter occupied the musty old guest-chamber of the castle, which had been closed for a decade, and in whose huge four-posted bed Louis XV. had once slept on the occasion of a hunting party. The heavy yellow silk curtains, in which the arms of the de Bridals were wrought in silver thread, threatened to fall to dust if one touched them ; the pillow-cases were edged with real lace, the silk counterpane with gold fringe, and a heavy silver hand-candlestick stood upon the stand. But pieces of

plastering were constantly falling from the ceiling, the window-shutters creaked and groaned in their frames, and however fast you closed the doors they were always springing open. The guest ate his morning broth out of a silver plate, and the frugal meal of noonday from the finest Sèvres china.

What cared the young guest for all these things? This solitary old château in Brittany appeared to him as a very fairy castle, the most magnificent place in all the world, for the most charming of girlish creatures inhabited it; and the old sweet myth of Thornrose and her knightly deliverer repeated itself: as it had already a thousand times upon earth.

Marion, at her father's wish, at once became the pupil of the young painter. From the first moment, he seemed to her more like a trusted, intimate friend than a stranger.

Oh! those drawing-lessons upon the terrace or under the trees of the park, while Père François, the old trusty chaperon, absorbed in his book, by no glance or syllable disturbed the innocent chatter of the young people. It was most beautiful in the forest, when the wind lightly rustled among the tree-tops, and the quivering lights ran over the paper, like merry children playing hide and seek. Oh! the sweet silences, the glances which sought and shunned, and at last rested longer and longer upon each other! It was all so wonderful! and this young girlish heart was so agitated, so full to overflowing! Marion had many times confessed to Père François; but she found no word for this enrapturing sensation which pulsed through her being; she only once alluded to it, half remorsefully, and as if some sin had overtaken her.

"I am so happy that I now think more of the beautiful earth and its dear mortals, than of Heaven and the dead!"

How, in so short a time, could she have given her heart to this entire stranger? She knew nothing of him save that he had the truest eyes in the world, the gentlest voice, the proudest smile, and, besides, the most skilful painter's hand. For the first time the world seemed flooded in real sunshine.

"When I pray for my lost mother, my father, and you, my dear teacher, I also pray for my guest," was her confession. "Is it wrong if I sometimes speak his name first, my father?" And Père François did not chide her. The deeper he penetrated into the young man's soul, the more calmly he saw the blue flower of love growing up in both these young, happy hearts. He held the guest of the Marquis de Bridal worthy the daughter of her glorified mother. Gilbert Lecomte was good and noble; he loved Marion—what more was needed to secure the happiness of this child? And Père François had longed for this—he felt himself day by day growing weaker, and he longed to lay this dear, entrusted treasure upon a warm heart, that would guard it even as he until this hour had sought to do.

The world was getting out of joint, he thought—they killed kings and queens; and women, like that never-to-be-forgotten one, slept the eternal sleep. Another race was taking possession of the earth; he himself would gladly give place; it was to him as if he had lived almost an eternity.

So, while Gilbert Lecomte devoted himself to teaching Marion his art, they were both learning something else. And a day came when they asked the good Père's intercession with the marquis—that he would sanction the marriage. But something stopped it.

In the family-room leading from the terrace sat the priest that evening with both his *protégés*. He was reading as usual, but the chess-board stood before him; the figures were placed; he every moment expected the Marquis de Bridal to take part in his wonted game. The happy lovers were chatting in low tones at the drawing-table, whose cover the evening sun painted scarlet. Not a stroke was to be seen upon the white page. Her hand could not trace any, for it lay imprisoned.

He whispered to her words, flying here and there, which sounded as nothing; but still said all a heart can wish to hear. The glow of the summer-evening heaven threw a reflection upon both. Père François turned his back to them. They saw not that he had long since let the book fall from his hand. Did this whispering disturb him, as even a perfume excites us, which suddenly floats in the air, letting another current of thought arise within us? Did his thoughts wander away to the dead—did they soar from this poor earth, with its brief, dreamy happiness, away to the fields of the blessed? Weary, endlessly weary, glanced the eyes out upon the terrace. To that place where once *her* arm-chair stood, and far beyond over the blooming wilderness; out to the little opening between the old trees—where the golden cross of the castle church shimmered in the fading sunlight.

Hasty steps suddenly echoed along the corridor; the door was thrown open, and the marquis stood upon the threshold. He looked as pale as upon that day when he entered the death chamber. "Marion!" he cried, in passionate excitement, without noticing the confusion of the lovers, "we are to have an exalted guest. An exalted—yes, the highest guest your father can receive. Arrange everything for her reception, my daughter: in a week all must be ready!"

"An exalted guest!" repeated Marion, rising in equal excitement, for her imagination was lending itself wings. "Can it be the First Consul?—with his wife, the beautiful Josephine?"

A disdainful smile flitted over the face of the marquis: who was even the wife of the Consul Bonaparte compared to the guest he was expecting?

"It pains me that you have no better understanding, Marion. A

letter has just announced to me the speedy arrival of my wonderfully gifted friend, the most renowned dancer of France—Mademoiselle Deligny. You will at last see the greatest enchantress upon the earth, happy child! Early to-morrow morning, I will give you an especial lesson; I have all sorts of plans in mind for her reception. Good evening, dear pastor! Our game of chess must be delayed until we are more calm—until after the arrival of Mademoiselle Deligny. I shall be very busy, and wish that no one may disturb me.”

He had indeed all sorts of fantastical plans in his head for the great event. He had wanted a dance of fairies; he wanted the old Père to put a crown of laurels on Mademoiselle’s head—but the Père declined, so he gave that part to himself. There were to be shepherds and shepherdesses, and crooks with ribbons, and lambs. All this while a broad smile of amusement might be seen on the face of Gilbert Lecomte.

“And what part have you in this comedy, Marion?” asked he.

“I am to offer, on a crimson-velvet cushion, that ugly, rose-red, satin shoe that papa treasures as a relic. But I have a little variation of this plan in mind. O, Gilbert,” she added—while the smile suddenly vanished from her face, and her eyes filled with tears—“what a blessed thing it is that mamma is no longer here! I now understand much which earlier I did not understand. How bitterly she must have suffered! To be obliged to share a heart with another. I could not endure it!”

What Gilbert now whispered to the weeping girl no one could hear, but they must have been magic words, for a radiant smile all at once transfigured Marion’s face.

Père François seldom appeared in the castle. These preparations for the reception of a woman who had caused such bitter suffering to the dead, grieved him. How strange was this life! How poor the world!

The excitement of the marquis increased from hour to hour. He appeared to be in a fever. His nights were sleepless. Ever and ever again in the most glowing colours he painted the scene of the meeting so ardently longed for. How the sweet little head of Mademoiselle Deligny, the bright face, mischievous and laughing as of old, would peer out of the coach window to greet him! How the little plumed hat, with the diamond *agraffe*, which she always wore, would nod and sparkle!

Of course, she must have grown a little older, he sometimes said to himself: just a little. But, in any event, far less old than he. And he still found himself very stately in appearance.

She would certainly reach forth her hand to him in greeting—that hand which he had so often kissed, and which was fine and white as that of a queen—and then, when he tore open the coach door, would appear

that most bewitching little foot, to which he thought of offering his hand in descending. A foot surely cannot grow old ! What kind of a shoe would she wear on her journey ? He had never seen the foot of Mademoiselle Deligny otherwise than in a red-satin shoe. He still guarded it under lock and bolt—he had. Was it then really possible that his wife could have had a smaller foot than this never-to-be-forgotten one ? He had never the heart to ask his child further concerning this.

And, surely, Mademoiselle Deligny would yield to his entreaties to dance that wonderful dance, "*La belle jardinière*," in the castle ! once : only once. Marion should learn to comprehend the spell thrown on all by this beautiful woman. *Vive la joie—vive la danse—vive Mademoiselle Deligny !*

The great day arrived at last : and the villagers, dressed in their best, came flocking to the castle to see the sight. They believed it must be at least the Duchess of Angouleme who was expected—a royal exile to whom the Consul had given a free passport, and who was now returning home.

The old castle garden was renowned for its roses, and rose-leaves were strewn wherever a spot could be found on which to strew them. And they should be freshly strewn each day, so long as the roses bloomed, decided the marquis. How long would she remain, this idolized one ? he asked himself the question a thousand times.

She had only written : "I would be your guest awhile for rest and health, if you, my dear marquis, have not forgotten the ardent friendship which once bound us. I do not require much to eat ; my stomach has become weak, and I drink wine only diluted with water. Paris is no more Paris, let me tell you. The world is wearisome and unthankful. I would fain in your quiet paradise remind you of those times when they called me '*la belle jardinière*.'"

It was a glowing summer afternoon. The trees stood motionless, as if bowing submissive to the ardent kisses of the sun. From the sky the heat came down, from the earth it rose. The flowers, as if spell-bound, closed their chalices, or, half fainting, hung their little heads : the birds, as if drunken with sleep, sat in the deep shadows ; beetles and dragon-flies droned lazily amid the grass : the butterflies hung, as if unconscious, upon the flowers ; the sun burned with a devouring flame.

Since early morning had been assembled, all in fantastic costumes, the Arcadian shepherdesses and shepherds. They only wished this beautiful young damsel would arrive, that they might take off the unusual clothes and get out of the heat.

And while they were wishing, and the cool fountains were playing, a hollow sound arose, betokening the arrival. All ran and cried out in

concert. A coach, drawn by two horses, was rolling into the court. Chests and boxes, thickly covered with dust, were heaped up upon its roof, the coachman's head scarce peered out above this mountain of baggage. Within were a lady and maid, and an angry tumult of barking dogs and a screeching parrot.

The Arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses hastily arranged themselves; Cupids strewed flowers. The Marquis de Bridal (unable to execute the pirouette he had planned, for his poor old legs were shaky that day) came limping down the castle steps. He stood before the coach-door, like a man spell-bound. *Where* was Mademoiselle Deligny?

"Eh bien bon jour, mon ami!" cried a sharp voice out of the inside of the coach. "Let the door be opened, we are stifling with the heat: and let the doors of the house and the windows be closed—draughts of air kill me! And let those two strong men there, carry me up the steps. And you, Louison, do not forget the smelling-bottle, and the dogs, and Coco. Where are my snuff-box and my fan?"

The Marquis de Bridal stood as if turned to stone. Who opened the coach-door, to whom that foot belonged which showed itself so helpless in its great woollen shoes, he knew not. His whole outward life, at this moment, passed in confused pictures before his sight. Was *this* the woman for whose sake he had wounded and lightly treasured the best heart in the world?

Awaking to the present, he hardly knew how, he saw his once beloved standing on the topmost step. What a sight! Leaning on his own shoulder on one side, and Jean's on the other, she laughed.

"My dear marquis, we have both grown old—that means, you a great deal more than I! Only women understand how to grow old gracefully."

She threw back her black lace veil. Was this sallow, ugly, malicious-looking woman, really Mademoiselle Deligny, the goddess of the world of the Paris of his day?

Yes, it was in truth—at least, what was left of her.

"Have I changed much?" she asked of him in a whisper. "Have you still that little red shoe, for the sake of which you were led into a quarrel with that rough captain of the Swiss Guards? The poor fellow lost his life in the defence of Versailles. You still remember that the rude man dared to declare that even smaller feet tripped about on this stony earth, and you fought him for saying it. At that time you vowed to love me until you had seen a smaller woman's shoe than that one of rose-red satin. You see I have a good memory, Monsieur le Marquis. Let us go in; I am weary!"

At the threshold of the castle, meeting them, there appeared a young girl in a simple white dress. In her hands she bore a scarlet velvet cushion. Louis XV. had knelt upon it during his morning devotions

in the castle of the Marquis de Bridal. Two shoes stood upon it, one rose-red with silver embroidery, and a much smaller shoe of pale-blue satin, with a blue rosette. This last was as if the little feet of a child had worn it. It stood there wreathed with flowers—the other was carelessly shoved aside. Mademoiselle Deligny glanced in astonishment, now upon the charming, girlish creature before her, now upon the cushion.

"You have held my shoe in honour, Monsieur le Marquis," she said. "But to whom belongs the much smaller one, and how comes it here?"

"It is the shoe my mother wore on her wedding-day," answered Marion, while her eyes proudly, and yet sorrowfully, met the glance of the once fair "danseuse." "My mother, the marchioness, had the smallest foot in the world, much smaller even than the wonder-foot of a Mademoiselle Deligny."

Mademoiselle Deligny remained only a week in that castle of Brittany. She could not find words to express her wonder at the change in the Marquis de Bridal. What a pity for him! And she herself had remained nearly wholly unchanged! "Both inwardly and outwardly, these men are the most changeable creatures upon earth," Mademoiselle repeated to herself, "and it is scarcely worth while to trouble one's self so much about them! I have so often experienced it—we poor women are always punished when—we follow our hearts."

And at the end of a week, which the marquis had thought an eternity, and during which he had always gone about with downcast eyes, Mademoiselle Deligny left the castle. As the coach rolled out of the court-gate, the chains fell from off the marquis—he breathed like a free man. But the mortification had been great.

Only a month later the wedding took place of Gilbert Lecomte and Mademoiselle de Bridal. Père François married them in the little chapel.

Gilbert remained in the castle with his young wife, and there painted those charming landscape pictures so justly celebrated, and which have since been sold for fabulous prices in Paris.

The master of the castle lost all his taste for dancing; and the portrait of Mademoiselle Deligny, as also a certain rose-red satin shoe, vanished, and left no trace behind. In place of the latter, a little blue satin shoe stood on his table; and every morning a fresh nosegay lay upon the steps of the castle church where the Marchioness de Bridal slumbered in peace.

And so passed his few last years; he did not even try to teach his little grand-children to dance.

But what a wasted life it had been!

THE DUTCHMAN'S BELLS.

IT was a bitter cold November in the year of grace 17—; damp fogs hung over the earth like a pall. The mists rose from the low fens of Lincoln and Nottinghamshire, the waters oozed out and inundated the meadows, carrying malaria in their train. Fields that in the merry haymaking time children shouted through, gardens where grew succulent vegetables, all now lay passive under the stagnant flood. The inhabitants of these shires had grown weary of this state of things, and had tried how far digging ditches and dykes all across the face of the country would alleviate this annual plague. Their work proved fruitless; abandoning the effort, they sent a call to the other side of the ocean, to the princes of drainage, the clever Dutch, to come and help them. They came, and this November great engineering was going on; canals were dug, deep dykes planned, every means of drainage these Dutchmen knew was put in use to redeem the Carrs of North Lincolnshire from the dread winter visitor, "the waters." Square-shouldered, heavy-built Dutchmen smoked long pipes, and drank their "Schnapps" in the lodgings of the small neighbouring towns. They were silent, steady men, most of them had a "vrau" at home and square-shouldered little children. The Lincolnshire lassies could not make many conquests, and so the Lincolnshire lads, having no cause for jealousy, were very friendly with these clever foreigners, who were redeeming their land for them. Every morning the Dutchmen, rolled up in warm wraps to keep out the cold, rode out from the towns and villages to the open country to superintend the dykes and dams, and stayed there till the afternoon's waning light warned them to hasten home; for it was evil travelling at night across that swampy land.

There was one stalwart Dutchman who had no "vrau" at home; he was better looking than most of them; taller, slighter, and more jovial; he looked about him more, and had noticed favourably a daughter of the land. This pretty lassie lived in a quaint little village called Grangely-super-Montem, a village whose proud prerogative is to stand not only on a hill, but on *the* only hill that exists for miles around. It was a pretty steep pull up to the village from every side, and from its beacon on a clear day—when so rare a thing occurred—the spectator could behold a vast panorama lying at his feet. They did say seventy churches and two cathedrals could be seen from its summit, but that Lucy Metcalfe could not certify; she was far too impatient and frolicsome a lass to have patience to count them all. She might often be seen running up and down the steep hill, playing with her young

brothers and sisters, for Lucy was only eighteen, and full of youth and health.

John Metcalfe was a respectable farmer who sent his daughter to market every week with produce, and no one's eggs and butter were so popular, no one's ducks and chickens so fat as Lucy Metcalfe's; no eyes shone more brightly, no hands were more quick and pretty in taking and giving change, no tongue more vivacious and full of gay repartee.

There were several young farmers around who had an eye on her, and thought what a good housewife she would make, but Lucy tossed her head, and pretended she did not see this admiration.

One day, Meinherr Wilhelm Van der Roost thought he would like a duck and some sausages for his dinner, and wandering into the market to buy, he came as far as Lucy's stall, and there became a fixture. For half an hour he stared at her, a contemplative pipe between his white teeth; for another half-hour he stared at her without a pipe—a sure sign that his mind was deeply stirred, and then he drew nearer, and touched a fat duck with his large thumb.

"Do you want a duck, sir?" asked pretty Lucy, who, of course, had noticed him fifty-nine minutes before, and had actually found means to discover that the starrer was the superintendent of the works in the North Lee Carrs, and one of the chief of the Dutch sent over.

Wilhelm fancied he had been quite unobserved, but then men are so dense about these things. He found Lucy very pretty, and on nearer inspection her figure was so slim, her hair so dark and wavy, her eyes of so beautiful a blue, and there were so many fat ducks to choose among, and such a savoury heap of sausages to look at, that his marketing took quite another half-hour. Lucy was very patient, though she used to be sharp enough sometimes to haggle or undecided customers. Meinherr's broken English was very hard to understand, and the noise in the market so great that Wilhelm had to come behind the stall to be comprehended at all.

"How is it your ducks are so fat?" (We will not try you with the Dutchman's bad English; you might not be so patient as Lucy was.)

"I don't know; they get better fed than the others, perhaps."

"And how is it you are so much fresher and rosier than the other girls?"

"Oh! we get fresher air, you know. I live at Grangely-super-Montem."

"Where? That's a hard name—Grange—Grange—"

Lucy laughed merrily, and made him repeat the name till he could say it right; that took quite ten minutes.

"And where is this favoured village?"

"Don't you know? When you are down in the Carrs, have you not seen a church tower on a hill? Our tower is a beacon for miles around."

"Ah! Yes, of course I have; and that is Grangely-super-Montem. Is your name so hard to speak?"

"Oh, no. It is Lucy."

"Lucy; ah, that is not hard, but soft, soft as your fat ducks. Lucy—what?"

"Metcalf."

"Oh, the harsh English! I will not try to say it even. I will stop at Lucy. And should I see you if I came to Grangely-super-Montem?"

"Perhaps you would; it depends where you went to."

"I would go to the high tower to breathe a deep draught of the fresh air that makes you so rosy. May I come and look for you. I want to know how to make sausages like these; they are so good."

"But you haven't tasted them yet."

"Ah, but I know."

"Cannot your wife, Mrs. Van der Roost—oh! what a long hard name—make sausages?" asked Lucy mischievously.

"Perhaps she could if I had ever found her, but I have no *vrau* at home, Lucy."

"Suppose you were to take your duck and go now, I have to be busy," suggested Lucy.

Wilhelm had no excuse ready, so after ten minutes more over the change, he slowly departed.

That evening the Dutchman smoked a great many contemplative pipes. The duck and sausages were so good that he thought he could not wait till next market day for another. Next morning, when he got to the Carrs, he looked up to the square tower of Grangely-super-Montem till he could resist no longer; he must fetch another duck.

In time he fetched a great many, and left his heart behind instead though he did not find this out at once; and it was longer still before he made the discovery that he had carried off Lucy's in its place.

It was December; the dullest days of all the year were at hand. Wilhelm wished the big drains were all dug and full of the slushy waters, that he might return to his beloved Holland with this pretty English Lucy and her recipes for fat ducks and sausage-meat. But neither of these wishes seemed likely to be fulfilled.

As regards Lucy, a great obstacle had arisen. Her parents would not hear of their daughter, the apple of their eyes, the light of their old age, going to a foreign land, a land—because to them unknown, full of all sorts of horrors and drawbacks—with a strange man, whose lingo puzzled them, and who might have half a dozen wives for aught they knew. So *Meinherr* Wilhelm Van der Roost was hunted away with a volley of north-country abuse, and such severe injunctions were laid upon Lucy against ever speaking to this Dutchman again, that the lovers were in despair.

But Lucy was wise, she never gave him up for a moment; she meant to go to Holland with him, come what would, yet she did not say so. She kept at home so quietly and docilely, she appeared to have

forgotten Wilhelm so easily, that her mother's fears were allayed; and though she would not let Lucy go to market any more, or even out of the village, she grew quite kind again.

Lucy's birthday was at hand. As a reward for her good conduct, her mother gave her leave to ask all her friends to the tea-party. Lucy clapped her hands with delight. How she would have liked to ask Wilhelm! But that would not do, her mother would have been outrageous. So Lucy had to make up her mind to do without him.

A few days before the party Lucy's mother had a dream. Now Dame Metcalfe was old-fashioned and simple in her notions, and possessed a long list of the meanings of dreams. This time she dreamed that Wilhelm Van der Roost came in one night as the clock struck twelve, and offered her a big meerschaum pipe, such as he used to smoke, and that Lucy was dancing round the room. She felt so angry with Wilhelm that she dashed the pipe from his hand; as she did so, her best china tea-set, that was always kept in a special cupboard, came down with a clatter about her head, and lay in a million fragments, mixed up with those of the big pipe.

The good mother told Lucy her dream. Now Lucy was not in the least a believer in dreams, but she had a quick wit, and while her mother ransacked her memory to ascertain what dreaming of a pipe betokened, Lucy read the riddle thus:

"Don't you see, mother, it means that on my birthday when I am dancing, just at twelve o'clock, Wilhelm will offer you the pipe of peace. That is, he will come again to ask you for me, and if you dash his offer aside, we shall be ruined, for he will let the floods swamp all the lands; now he's got those big drains full, you know, he could soon let it overflow all our Carr land; that is the china tea-set falling down. So, mother, if he should come—though that's quite impossible since you've refused to let him come near us—but if by any strange chance he should come, you would not say nay again, would you, mother?"

The good dame was puzzled. Lucy was a very Daniel in her interpretation, and twist her dream in which way she would, she could not read it any better than Lucy had done, and she was not one to regard a dream lightly. Her only consolation was that Wilhelm would not know of it and come. She would keep the doors well fastened, and take care to send everyone home by eleven on Lucy's birthday, so that they might all be in bed and asleep before twelve, and then the Dutchman could not fulfil the dream. To fly in the face of it never occurred to the simple woman; but there, of course, he would not come; how was it likely?

Lucy said no more; she sang as light-heartedly as ever over her work. The day before her birthday was market-day. Lucy coaxed her mother to let her go this once to buy some ribbons for her adornment to-morrow, and to meet some distant neighbours whom she could

not ask otherwise to the frolic. Lucy had been so good that her mother consented on solemn condition that she would not speak to Wilhelm if she saw him. She promised readily, and they set off.

For several hours Lucy stood by her mother, or chatted with her friends, apparently gaily enough. But her eyes continually roved in search of a handsome bronzed face, and her heart ached with fear lest she should not see it.

At last, in the afternoon, just before the market people were beginning to pack up, Wilhelm Van der Roost strolled through the place, his head down, his eyes fixed on the ground; he did not look about him so much now, you see. Lucy stamped with impatience; if he did not look up it was all over with their hopes. She coughed loudly; he started; their eyes met. A deep flush stole over his face, and he stood transfixed. Lucy cautiously glanced towards her mother: the good lady was deep in gossip with a crony. Lucy gave Wilhelm a meaning glance, took aim, and threw an egg at him. The aim was good; it hit his nose. For a moment Wilhelm looked aghast. Could the simple, loving Lucy, who had clung to him bathed in tears when last he saw her, be turning against him now, and making him openly ridiculous. He stroked his nose; it was none the worse, no daub of yellow yolk was on it. He looked again at Lucy; her tearful, imploring look, and a finger pointing to the offending missile gradually revealed to him the possibility that the egg might be a means of communication. He picked it up just after the heavy heel of a farmer had trodden it flat. There was a small piece of paper inside, and that was uninjured. He read the paper slowly; once, twice; and then, after carefully watching Lucy, that he might catch her eye unseen, he gave three solemn, quiet nods. Lucy gave a hasty one in return, and smiled happily. They were only just in time; a second later, and the good old women's gossip ended.

Wilhelm went home with the precious little scrap of paper that had cost Lucy some time of careful thought and laborious writing; for in those days young girls were not the ready writers our farmhouse lassies are now, and this note had to be both short and clear. It ran thus:—

"If you love me, come to-morrow night to our big barn door at half-past eleven of the clock; wait there till I come, and mind and bring your very biggest pipe with you. Do this as you love me: it is our last chance; nod three times if you understand this aright."

The ruse had succeeded; the three nods were as good as an oath to Lucy that her lover would not fail. It was such a weight off her mind that all had gone well.

The birthday evening came, and Lucy was in a fever of expectation and delight, though her pleasure in her smart clothes, and in the various viands she had prepared with her own hands, was rather dashed by the

thought that Wilhelm would not be by to praise and admire. The tea was a great success; it was a regular north-country tea, such as we southerners never see. There were pies by the score, pork, pigeon, and beef; there were fat geese and fowls, both hot and cold; there were whole loads of buns, cakes, and plum-loaves.

When all this food was gradually consumed, the games and dancing began in the big farm kitchen. Lucy's eyes often wandered to the clock, and so did her mother's. The good lady had not forgotten her dream, and was firmly resolved that by eleven o'clock the guests must go, Lucy be tucked up in her little white bed, far out of reach of that dreadful Dutchman, and the china set securely locked up to prevent its clattering down.

"L'homme propose, Dieu dispose." In the course of the evening a rumour arose that a poor crazy lad was locked up in the church. There had been a funeral that afternoon, and one Billy Watkins, "a softie," was seen gaping and gazing about the church, and had not turned up since: and as they were passing, some one had been terrified by a sound of crying coming from the empty building. Since then Billy had been missed, so this "some one" put two and two together, and said he must be in the church.

Now Reuben the sexton was likewise Reuben the fiddler, and when the young people came to the old man, and begged him to proceed at once to the church to let out the boy, he did not feel at all inclined to go. He was so cosily ensconced in Farmer Metcalfe's chimney corner, and so happy fiddling, and tipping warm ale, that he readily consented to let some one go in his stead. Five or six big lads volunteered, "for the fun of the thing." Lucy let them out under pretence of seeing what sort of a night it was. It was a bitterly cold one, and a dense raw fog hung over the land.

"What a bad night for Wilhelm's ride," thought Lucy; "however, it's a good road here from the market town, and he knows it well. It's half-past ten now; in an hour he will be here."

"Mind yourselves, lads," she cried aloud, as the six youths, noisy with beer and dancing, set off.

"Never fear, Lucy," answered one of them, "we'll have such a lark! We'll ring the bells in your honour."

"No, no, don't."

"Indeed we will; just you listen."

Lucy was in hopes it was only a joke: it would be so stupid if they did it, and everyone would wonder what it meant. The bells never rang except on Sundays or for some great event, and the sound might puzzle Wilhelm. But true enough, some moments later, a first chime, then a second fell on the air, and presently a noisy, merry peal, made itself heard above the din of the party in the kitchen. Four of the lads were bell-ringers, so they knew what they were doing, and soon a regular

swell of sweet church bells roused the quiet village and electrified the guests at Farmer Metcalfe's. Lucy repeated what the boys had said. People cried, "Ah, boys will be boys," and went on with their fun.

The bells chimed away; eleven o'clock struck; Mrs. Metcalfe fidgeted. Unfortunately, one of the lads was her own Jack, so that at the first hint of a break-up everyone vociferously put her down.

"Those lads will want first a good hiding, and then a good roasting and toasting after their cold freak, wife," said the hospitable farmer.

The clock's hands stole along; Lucy slipped out unperceived to the barn door. It was cold and dark outside, and Lucy had flung a warm shawl over her. The half-hour struck; "now Wilhelm will be here," she thought. But no sound or sight of him came. Five minutes more passed: she grew fidgety; ten, and she grew impatient; fifteen, she grew cold and miserable; twenty, she burst into tears.

Oh! had he forsaken her! Was this a sign he no longer loved her? Why did he not come?

"Oh, Wilhelm, Wilhelm, where are you?" cried poor Lucy, laying her curly head against the barn door, and sobbing aloud.

A quarter to twelve struck; it would soon be too late.

And where was Wilhelm all this time? He had dressed himself with particular care that day, and had set out early to the Carrs. There he found that something had gone wrong with a drain; so, instead of returning as usual at four o'clock to the town, he made up his mind to stop later at the works; in fact, as long as he could see.

"It doesn't look like a bad night," he said to himself, "and my horse and I can find our way blindfold up to Grangely; I'll go about six o'clock, and get tea at the inn just below the village, and wait there till eleven. I wonder what is up in Lucy's clever little head?"

At six, a thick blinding fog rose up from the swamps. The workmen left; Wilhelm extinguished the candle in his little office, where he had been making some calculations, and mounted his good steed, Hans.

"Now, Hans" he said, "quick as you can, up-hill."

Hans did not like the fog any more than his master, as he trotted off fast enough. They rode for many minutes through the dense darkness. Wilhelm thought that Hans was extra active in going up-hill so nimbly, and yet it did not seem like riding up-hill either. Had they got wrong? He could soon tell, for a few minutes more ought to bring them to a steep, stoney hill, whence they could see the village lights. Half an hour's more easy riding convinced both Hans and Wilhelm that they were wrong. Hans stopped suddenly and snorted.

"Yes, yes, I know you've come wrong, well enough," muttered his rider. "What's to be done? I thought we started rightly. Where are we?"

Hans turned round.

"You want to go back, you sensible beast, do you? Well, if you

can find your way back to the town, that will do as well; so there, guide yourself; it won't be the first time, eh, Hans?"

Hans trotted off, but, after some time, he pulled up at no other place but at the door of the little office by the drains.

"Confound you, Hans!" cried Wilhelm; "I thought we were to go back to the town; however, it might be worse."

He dismounted, and fetching out a candle, stuck it into a kind of rough lanthorn.

"Now, Hans, we will try again in this style."

Once more they set off, on the right road; the candle threw an uncertain light; still, even that was better than nothing.

"We must have gone wrong at the cross-roads," said Wilhelm; "if this candle will but let us read the sign-post, we shall do."

But suddenly Hans gave a false step, plunged, and over went Wilhelm, candle and all, on to a roadside bank. He jumped up unhurt, but Hans and candle were gone.

Wilhelm swore some terrible Dutch oaths; all at once he started at feeling a soft nose rubbing his shoulder. Poor Hans had only been looking for his master. With a growl, Wilhelm remounted. As he did so, he wondered which way Hans' head was turned, it was all so very confusing; if only the fog would lift!

But it didn't, and they got hopelessly lost. Hours passed, miles were traversed, once more they found themselves back at the office. This time Hans was stirred again with difficulty, but Wilhelm would not give up the effort.

"It can't be more than nine o'clock; I won't fail Lucy if there's a mortal way of getting there."

Again they proceeded, footpace this time. Hurrah! he could see lights shining in the distance.

"Cheer up, Hans, old beast, we're right at last. Now for Stoney Hill."

Wilhelm had rejoiced too soon: a moment later, and Hans had nearly sunk in a quagmire; the lights were will-o'-the-wisps. After intense difficulty the poor horse was dragged out, Hans shivered with fright, and whined piteously. Wilhelm Van der Roost was in despair; all thought of his appointment with Lucy was lost now in the thought of saving his poor horse's life. It was a terrible predicament. Taking the weary horse's bridle, he slowly, step by step, sought to regain firmer ground.

"And if once we find it, Hans, we'll stop there. The fog may lift at midnight: if it doesn't, we can but freeze to death instead of being smothered in the swamp."

Suddenly Wilhelm's head came in contact with something hard.

"What's that?" he cried, and felt it up and down. Was it a tree trunk, or a gate post? Happy thought! was it the finger-post at the cross-roads?

Slipping the bridle over his arm, he climbed up, and felt the four long arms stretching out. Yes, it was the finger-post; now then, which led to Grangely? There was the difficulty! He tried to strike a light with flint and steel, but the fog prevented him. There seemed no help for it but waiting. He fretted to think of Lucy, lest she should deem him false to his word.

But hark! What was that sound that made Wilhelm's heart beat quicker, and cause poor Hans to plunge?

One, two, three, cling, clang, cling, rang out the merry church bells through the fog.

"Grangely bells, Grangely bells!" cried Wilhelm, joyously. They sounded so close and clear. "We are saved, my poor beast."

The horse snorted, as if he too, knew that a good thing had happened. Wilhelm mounted once more, riding in the direction of the sound.

"Come this way, come this way," the bells seemed to be pealing, loudly and more loudly. Cling, clang, cling.

It was all right, the road began to ascend; impatient Hans had to slacken pace up the steep, stoney hill. At last the village lights began to glimmer.

"Cling, clang, cling, clang," still crashed the bells, as Wilhelm rode by the church. He had no idea what time it was, but he would ride straight to the barn door. Fortunately, the fog was not nearly so dense up here, and he could see around him.

When he reached the barn door, he jumped off Hans, and tied him up. As he did so, a sound of sobbing fell on his ear, and he saw a figure leaning against the door.

"Lucy!" he cried.

With a spring, she was in his arms. As fast as he could, he told her of his peril, and how the bells had saved him.

At that moment they ceased; the fact was, the lads knew it was midnight, and they were afraid to cross the churchyard later for fear of ghosts.

Dame Metcalfe looked at the clock: it wanted one minute to twelve; she felt uncanny. Where was Lucy? she didn't see her. She looked at the best tea-set, which she and some gossips had washed, replaced, and locked up in the corner glass cupboard. No games were being played now, and dancing was getting slack. Folks were growing weary, and wanted to be home. They got impatient at the lengthened absence of the boys. Old Reuben, now that fiddling and tippling had ceased, began to wonder whether the parson would blow him up to-morrow for the untimely ringing of the bells.

"Lucy," called Dame Metcalfe, sharply; "Lucy, child, where are you?"

The big clock began to strike the hour slowly and solemnly. At the first chime the door opened, and in walked Meinherr Wilhelm Van der Roost, wet and damp with fog, smoking a huge meerscham pipe.

Every one looked up astonished. The Dutchman walked straight up to the dame, utterly unconcerned by the many questioning eyes fixed on him, laid his pipe in her lap, placed his hand on his heart, and drew shy little Lucy forward with the other.

A scene of questions, answers, explanations, followed. A few minutes later the six lads stole in, looking rather sheepish, for they feared a licking. When they came in, they found Wilhelm and Lucy sitting hand-in-hand, and the dame herself heaping hot food on a plate for his supper. The story was briefly related to them; and the boys suddenly found themselves heroes, and gladly pocketed the broad piece Wilhelm gave them, calling them the savers of his life.

In gratitude for this, Wilhelm, before he returned to Holland, taking with him his faithful Lucy, and her recipes for fat ducks and sausage meats, left a sum of money which was to pay for the ringing of Grangely-super-Montem bells every 19th of November. So they ring to this day; and the stranger in the village is surprised about ten o'clock on this evening to hear the bells ring, cling, clang, cling, through the night air. If you ask the cause, the villagers say, "Those are the Dutchman's bells."

I have heard them; and so can you, if you ever go to Grangely-super-Montem.

I forgot to say Silly Billy was found fast asleep under the kitchen stairs, so "some one's" ears had played them false. Clearly, it was the good angels of Wilhelm Van der Roost who rang the bells.

As for Dame Metcalfe, she became a greater believer in dreams than ever.



PETRARCH.

IT was in the days of civil strife in Florence. The Republic, like the fickle mistress that she was, was stripping and turning out of doors her best servants, and was petting and clothing with honour her worst ones. Among those who, driven by the decree of banishment, hurried out of the city's southern gate, were a young couple whose whole look and bearing showed that they were little used to be wanderers on the high-road of life. The gentleman constantly glanced behind him, as though he could not persuade himself that he was not followed by a retinue of servants. The lady, notwithstanding the dainty paces of her well-trained palfrey, began, before they had gone many miles, to droop in her saddle, as if fatigue was a very new thing to her. After some hours of weary travel, they reached the town of Arezzo. There they might pause, for they were beyond the Florentine territory, and there, preferring this to a more distant exile, they set up their household gods. Much of their wealth had been confiscated, so that their housekeeping had to be carried on in a very modest style; but the gentle blood which ran in their veins kept them from loud outward complaint. No doubt the young wife, soon to be a mother, shed in secret many a tear as she felt her hour of trial drawing nigh, thus distant from parents and aunts and sisters. Eletta was her name, and elected, she probably thought herself, to bear much trouble; whereas she was elected to a very high honour.

One summer day, in 1304, she became the mother of Francesco Petrarch. As she looked at her boy, Eletta very likely mourned to think that he would not be able in after-life to boast of being a native of fair Florence. She did not know that in future ages Florence was to count it among her highest distinctions that this child was of Florentine race.

Francesco was hardly freed from his swaddling clothes when his father, with that restlessness peculiar to exiles, removed the whole family from Arezzo to Pisa. There they stayed for about two years; and the little fellow's first tottering, baby footsteps were traced on the banks of the Arno. When he was three, the decree of banishment was, through the influence of friends in Florence, revoked towards the Petrarch family, as far as Eletta and her son were concerned, and part of their property was restored to them. The father was glad to secure to his dear ones a safer and more comfortable home than he could find for them in his wanderings; and Eletta, though she wept at parting from her husband, smiled again when relations and old familiar companions crowded around her to admire her gallant boy.

She did not, however, stay long in the town. She withdrew to

Ancisa, a village about fourteen miles from Florence, and settled there on a small estate belonging to her husband. This she did partly, perhaps, to keep down her expenses, and partly, perhaps, to devote herself more entirely to her son. Here his mother, who must have been a clever woman in her way, breathed into the boy Petrarch that high religious feeling which strengthened his whole life, and led him up the first steps of the ladder of knowledge; and here he acquired that taste for the sights and sounds of the country, and that love of its quiet, which clung to him till the end of his days. The song of the nightingale, the whisper of the wind, the murmur of the stream, all re-echo constantly through his verse; and even when he is most rapturous about Laura's beauty he will often pause to tell of the grass and flowers on which she treads.

No doubt, also, it was through the healthy outdoor life which he led as a child at Ancisa that he gained the physical strength which afterwards enabled him to become one of the best horsemen and swordsmen of that day of bold riding and hard fighting. Eletta at that time worked well and wisely for both the body and mind of the future poet.

But the mother and son were not to stay always in that quiet retreat. After some time, the elder Petrarch, finding that he could not get permission to return to Florence, sent for his wife and boy, and they went all together to Avignon, where they settled.

Avignon was at that time the seat of the Papal government. It was a large, busy, priestly, desperately naughty city, in which the strangest contradictions went on in the lives of men and women. At night high born ladies, at ball or banquet, in jewels and silks, cast to the winds every scantiest veil of modesty. Next morning they washed in sackcloth the feet of poor pilgrims. When night came again they glittered and danced and laughed and sinned as boldly as ever. A nobleman would walk bare-headed and footed in a religious procession on Good Friday, and before Easter Day rose would have coolly sent one of his bravos to run a dagger into his neighbour's heart. The very Pope himself went in the sight of all men from the high altar to the bower of his mistress. In short, Avignon was a town of much holy bell-ringing, and much unholy noise besides; much dishonest trading, and much pious idleness; much crooked love making, and yet more crooked policy.

This was not exactly the atmosphere which Eletta and his father liked little Francesco to breathe. To counteract as much as possible its bad effects they kept him very tightly at his books: and the result of this was that at fifteen the lad was a match for any school man of fifty. No doubt he was a conceited young prig enough at this time, but intercourse with the world, as it always does, soon rubbed off his vanity; and in after life he was the least self-asserting of men. Proud of his son's talents, the elder Petrarch chalked out for him a grand career as an advocate, which was to end in the judge's ermine. He

therefore sent Francesco to study law, first at Montpellier, and then at Bologna.

It was the old story of the tender shoots of young genius being pulled and twisted and almost broken by well meaning, but ignorant hands which wanted to train it to grow towards the east, while its whole bias was to grow towards the west. As he was a good son, young Petrarch moped and yawned patiently for a few years over his law books, and as he was clever at keeping his own counsel, the old legal professors little dreamed that while in the lecture-room they prosed away over his head, his fancy was far away among the green fields, or far back in ancient heroic story. He managed at the college at Bologna to learn a good deal besides law, and among his fellow students he made friends enough to last his life.

Among these, the most remarkable and best loved by Petrarch was Giacomo Colonna, a scion of that noble Roman family. Colonna became a priest, and contrived (as young ecclesiastics of good birth did often contrive to do in those days of lax church discipline) to slip into the bishop's purple almost as soon as he received the tonsure. The usual results of the episcopal staff being put into such youthful hands were, as may well be supposed, very unclerical doings in the Bishop's palace. But young Colonna was an honourable exception to this rule. His life was pure; no small virtue among the higher clergy of the day; and he did good work among his poor and in his library. Colonna would, however, probably not have been at all remembered by posterity, except, perhaps, from a half-worn-out inscription on his tomb, if it had not been for the fact that Francesco Petrarch loved him as a brother, and made him often the confidant of his literary work. To be the friend of a man or woman of genius is a much surer passport to immortality than to have the longest pedigree that ever bothered the brains of a Debrett or a Burke.

When Petrarch was twenty-two, both his parents died. Soon after that he joyfully threw away his law books, and resolved to live for literature, and literature alone. He went back to Avignon. But the ways of the town were not much to his taste, and its whirl and noise distracted his mind. He therefore spent part of the fortune inherited from his father in buying a small estate at Val Chiusa, a pretty, quiet nook some miles from Avignon. Thither he retired, and spent his time with his pen and his books, only now and then seeing a few friends who came out from the town to visit him.

The young man was not, however, always satisfied with this monotonous way of life. About this period he took a long journey, in which he saw many of the European capitals, and formed, among the learned of foreign lands, friendships which he afterwards kept up through constant correspondence. The world already began to speak of Petrarch as a rising man of letters.

One Good Friday he was in the church of Santa Chiara, at Avignon. There he saw a face which made him forget his prayers; a face from which the dark eyes of the South looked forth, though the bright hair of the North waved around it; a face which somehow exactly fitted into the niche of his ideal; a face which was to stamp itself upon his verse for all ages and for all lands. Petrarch had fixed his first look on Laura.

Afterwards he got to know her personally, and they often met in society. Of Laura herself nothing certain is known, except that her maiden name was Noves and she lived in Avignon. Some writers say that she always remained single, in her father's house, and some that she married and had many children. There are a few pictures of her, for the authenticity of which it is impossible to answer. They are all handsome, and remarkable for an almost nun-like shyness and sweetness of expression. She was certainly a woman of refined taste and cultivated mind, and at a time when female modesty was the only rare adornment of the fair sex in Avignon, her character was as stainless as the first snow flake which fell on the summit of the Estrelles.

The connection between Petrarch and Laura seems to our modern ideas a very singular one. At the very time when he was publicly offering her the most passionate incense in his verse, there was another woman, whose name has never been even whispered by fame, who sat at his hearth and was the mother of his children. What were really the relations between the poet and this woman, it is quite impossible to tell. As, however, his life seems to have been peculiarly free from the licence of the day, and as in a confession of his sins which is extant he mentions none of this sort, it is perhaps possible that she was a woman of low rank, to whom Petrarch was noiselessly, almost secretly, married. If this was the case, it is pleasant to think of the poet having a little home nest, hidden from the world, in which he could always find rest and affection.

To explain the position in which Petrarch and Laura stood to each other, we must turn to the manners and customs of their age and country. Partly, perhaps, through the great reverence paid in the Roman Catholic Church to the Virgin Mary and other female saints, a sort of woman worship had, in the thirteenth century, spread through the south of Christendom. It was no unusual thing for a knight or a troubadour to select a certain lady, celebrate her in his songs, call on her name in the hour of danger, and wear her colour in battle. The adored or the adorer might be either of them married—that made no difference; and the tender litany would sometimes run on for years, long after the idol's hair was silvered and her form more remarkable for plumpness than grace. Homage of this sort did not at all hurt the reputation of her to whom it was paid; not even her husband and children respected her the less for it. Some distinguished ladies had many devotees of the kind. On her side, the woman professed herself

to have for her worshipper an equable cordial feeling, which never went beyond sisterly friendship. Whether these platonic attachments ever slid into something warmer we cannot say. The history of the time gives us no examples of such being the case.

In keeping up the connection which they did together, Petrarch and Laura were then only doing what it was a very common thing to do in the Provence of their day. No doubt Laura, as well as the rest of the platonic sisterhood, had a way of putting a kind of demure coquetry into the glances which she cast down from her shrine on her votary; and no doubt it was a matter of pride with all these ladies to keep their servants as long as possible at their feet. With Laura, the pleasurable vanity produced by incense of this sort must have been increased by the fact of him who offered it being one of the greatest men of his time, and she probably did her utmost to prolong her power over him.

As for Petrarch, Laura's beauty and the graces of her mind first awoke within him a romantic sentiment, which, according to the fashion of his brethren the troubadours, he at once began publicly to proclaim in his verse. By degrees, through his thoughts constantly dwelling on her, his glorious genius created out of Laura Noves, an ideal being who was woven into his deepest feelings, and his most aerial fancies, and his highest aspirations. What mattered it to him that the real Laura as years went on grew middle-aged and changed. His own Laura was gifted with immortal youth. Even after her death his imagination was still filled with her and the sweet cadences in which he mourns her, and the more exalted strains in which he follows her to her home above, will always be regarded by his readers as some of the most precious gems he has left them. Laura should be thought of with gratitude by posterity, if it were only for the divine music which she called forth; and very likely intercourse with her may have brought out the more delicate perfumes of Petrarch's genius. Such is often the effect of refined female society on men of intellect.

But Laura was not the poet's only theme. Love of his country was probably Petrarch's strongest passion. Italy was then a complete patchwork of small states, and it was the dream of Petrarch's whole life to see the Peninsula united from the Alps to Spartivento. In words, burning as the summer suns which shine upon his native land, and powerful as the sudden storms which sometimes sweep over her shores, he spoke out this great longing of his life.

Petrarch was the author of many Latin poems, which (in that age, when to dig up and reanimate a dead language, was esteemed far more worthy of a learned man than to clothe with dignity and grace a living one), were even held in higher honour than his writings in Italian. One of these Latin poems—that on Scipio Africanus—was a great favourite among his contemporaries, but to us it is the coldest and stiffest of his works.

Petrarch's fame went on steadily increasing, until at thirty-seven he was universally acknowledged as the first poet of the period. When he had reached that age, there came to his quiet little home at Val Chiusa, two messengers from two great European cities, namely, Rome and Paris, each of which begged him to accept the laureate's crown within its walls. The true Italian could not long doubt which offer he should choose. The Paris invitation was courteously but immediately refused, and proudly and gratefully Petrarch hastened to Rome.

The act of receiving the crown of a poet laureate was, in those days of magnificent ceremonials, attended with much really regal pomp. Dressed in a robe of purple velvet glittering with jewels, such as suited the taste for splendour of the time, and such as in truth well befitted a literary prince, Petrarch was conducted with much public state through Rome to the Capitol, where he was thrice crowned : once with laurel, once with ivy, and once with myrtle. The laurel meant glory ; the ivy signified the lasting fame which should attend his work ; the myrtle was the lawful right of Laura's poet.

The Italian princes vied with each other in trying to get Petrarch to their Courts, and in heaping favours upon him. He visited nearly all of them in turn. The life of a palace was perhaps not much more to Petrarch's taste than the life of a great city. But he was too much a man of the world not to be gratified by these honours, and besides, through the intimacy which he thus gained with the chief men of his country, he was able to work better towards his darling object, the unity of Italy. Many remarkable persons are briefly mixed up with the story of the poet in these days of his wanderings from city to city. We catch a glimpse of him being caressed and toyed with by a beautiful girl on whose dark hair there rests a crown. More than womanly depth of thought sits enthroned on her brow. Reckless gaiety flashes in her eyes. In her firm mouth there is perhaps a warning of darker passions which as yet slumber within her. Why did they mate her with that dull, listless youth, who looks as if the only thing which could surprise him would be a spark of wit coming from himself? If they had given her a more genial companion, there might perhaps have been no black page in the story of Joanna of Naples, the Mary Stuart of the South.

We also see Petrarch grasping for a moment the hand of a man, who, although no royal blood runs in his veins, looks in truth like a king among his fellows. Command is in his glance, dignity in the very movement of his hand. The dews of eloquence seem hanging around his lips even before he speaks. The whole of the eternal city is as one vast temple in which this man is adored. The demi-gods of ancient Rome hide their heads, indignant at this new divinity. But let them wait a little and they shall see that Roman mob, whose fickle temper they in their own day knew but too well, tear in pieces its idol, and Rienzi shall be but a name for romance and poetry to dream about.

The middle of Petrarch's life was darkened by the loss of many friends. One night he dreamt that he saw Bishop Colonna on the brink of a great river which he was about to cross. It seemed to Petrarch that he tried to stop him, but the Bishop answered sternly, "Hinder me not." Then the poet thought that he looked into his friend's face, and saw to his dismay that he was a dead man. Almost immediately he heard of Colonna's death, and according to the superstition of the age, set down this dream which was but the product of his anxious thoughts about his friend, who was in ill health, as a true omen.

Soon after, Laura died, struck down by the plague which raged in Avignon, and Petrarch who, without counting all the ideal romance with which he had surrounded her, had for her a strong warm friendship, mourned her very deeply. Several other friends of his youth at this time also passed away from the earth. The heart of the poet was cruelly wounded by these losses, but he sought comfort in work and study, and devoted himself more entirely to the interests of his country.

As years went on the poet's love of a country life revived. He had done his utmost for Italy, but the result of that utmost had been nothing. The rest of his days should be given alone to literature. He therefore gave up frequenting courts, and bought a little estate at Arquà, a village among the Lombard hills, whither he retired. We like to fancy him in this pleasant home of his age with his tall lithe figure still unbent, his face, though careworn, still shining with intellectual light, his hand busy with the pen. Petrarch always loved the little elegancies of life, and no doubt, even in this country retreat, we should have seen him (unlike most of the literary brotherhood, whose very livery is untidiness) neatly dressed, and surrounded by as many pretty knick-knacks as the fourteenth century could afford. We should not ever have found his table very splendidly spread. Eletta's son kept the simple tastes acquired at Ancisa at her side, and liked best a diet of fruit and vegetables.

Once the call of friendship drew him out of his solitude; Carrara, the Prince of Padua, who had been for many years the poet's friend and patron, had got into a mess with the Venetian republic, and sent for Petrarch to get him out of it. This the poet's skill and eloquence very soon did, and then he went back to Arquà. Florence the Fair had a peculiar way of her own of doing tardy justice to her children. She wept over Dante's grave; and after many years she begged Petrarch to come and live in the home of his fathers, within her walls. But the poet did not go. He had grown to think all Italy his country, rather than one city. Besides, a brighter home was beginning to open on the old man's view. Eletta and Laura, and many other dear ones, waited for him there, and when he had been seventy years upon earth God called him to join them.

ALICE KING.

CAPTAIN POWELL.

BY S. R. A.

FORTY years ago, the bark "Mary Burton," having shipped her cargo in New York, set sail with a favourable breeze for Liverpool. The dangers of the channel being past, the pilot left; and the captain, who had hitherto only paced the deck to see that the pilot's orders were promptly obeyed, resumed the command.

Captain Powell was a bachelor, in his best years, of slender, but sinewy frame, with brown curly hair and blue eyes; a Scotchman by birth, and a smart sailor. He had sailed about all his life on the different seas of the globe, till at last he had settled down on the packet line between New York and Liverpool.

Crowded as the packet ships were on the voyage to America, they brought back but few to the old country, and on this occasion the Mary Burton carried only six passengers. Among these were Mrs. and Miss Ellis—a mother and daughter.

They were not unknown to Captain Powell. He had made their acquaintance in New York; being intimate with part of their family. He and Miss Ellis had frequently met at her uncle's house, where he became passionately attached to her, and proposed marriage. She, who had never encouraged him—in fact had not known the nature of his liking for her—at once rejected him, candidly telling him that she was already engaged to another gentleman. So Captain Powell retired within himself, and said no more.

Mrs. Ellis, perhaps naturally, chose to go to England by the Mary Burton, as she knew (and liked) Captain Powell, rather than take ship with a stranger. He was well pleased that it should be so: and when they came on board received them warmly, insisting upon giving up his own state-room exclusively to them. The young lady would have declined, but Mrs. Ellis, who loved comfort, accepted it at once. There was no other cabin in the ship so commodious as that.

The first two days the ladies never appeared at all, not even at meals—as is usual with those unaccustomed to the sea. The weather was very rough. On the third day the sea was calmer, and though there was still a stiff breeze, they succeeded in getting on deck.

"Well done, Mrs. Ellis," said the captain, hastening to meet them. "You are right to come up and get some fresh air. It is splendid weather, and if this breeze holds, I hope to set you, safe and sound, ashore in Liverpool in fourteen days. And are you comfortably settled in your cabin, Miss Kate?"

"Much more so than we could expect," replied the young girl. "I only regret that our comfort should be at the expense of yours."

"Do not mention it," said Captain Powell, and a slight colour spread

over his usually pale face. "Heaven knows how thankful I should be to think you felt yourself at home on my vessel."

"You are very kind, dear captain," said the mother; "very." For her daughter, instead of answering, turned abruptly away, and became absorbed in watching the gulls.

After this, though the weather was still pleasant, she did not make her appearance for two days. Miss Ellis had a headache, it was said, and needed rest. The third day the young lady came up again; and the deck happened to be clear of all save the master and steersman. Captain Powell went to her, and held out his hand, reproach pervading every tone of his voice.

"How could you hide yourself from us so long, Kate? You have no idea how long the time has seemed to me."

"I have not felt well," said Miss Ellis. "I am only come now for a little fresh air."

"Are you going to make the voyage across in your state-room?" asked the captain, in a low tone. "I was thinking how many happy hours we should spend together on deck here."

"There is still a long voyage before us," replied she, evidently ill at ease.

"But how soon will the days pass! and who can tell how long we shall have this pleasant weather? Storm and rain will frighten you down, while I shall have to do my duty up here. Don't be cruel, Miss Ellis. You do not know—" He broke off suddenly, and Kate looked at him in terror, with so strangely violent and hoarse a voice were the last words spoken. His appearance, also, was altered; his face was deathly pale; his eyes had turned red, as if they were bloodshot. As though he himself were aware of this, he turned from her abruptly and walked to the other side of the deck.

The young girl no longer felt safe with this strange man; his behaviour struck her with a chill, hardly to be accounted for. Trembling from head to foot, she went below to her mother.

"What is the matter, child?" cried Mrs. Ellis in fright. "How pale you are! Can't you bear the rolling of the ship yet?"

"Oh, mother!" sighed Kate, "it is not that. I wish you had granted my request, and waited for another vessel. I was so afraid of this."

"Foolish child! another would have rolled just as much as this."

"It is not that, I say, mother. You know that in New York—you know what passed. That Captain Powell proposed to me."

"And very good taste of him too," returned Mrs. Ellis, complacently looking at her pretty daughter. "What of that? You told him that you were engaged; and there the matter ended."

"Yes, that ought to have ended it. I thought it did. But his behaviour seems so strange to-day that I am afraid of him. Never leave me alone on deck, mother; mind that. The voyage will be over some time."

"What nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Ellis. "Captain Powell is a gentleman: and if he is pleased with your pretty face, that is nothing uncommon. He has shown his good feeling towards us."

"And placed us under an obligation to him."

"Stuff!" returned Mrs. Ellis. "It makes him happy to know we are comfortable, and that is all the thanks he wants. Besides, we are not the only passengers."

Kate Ellis answered nothing, but as she looked dreamily out of the port-hole, the image of the pale, excited man, with his glowing eyes, was still before her, and she could not banish it. From this time she kept close by her mother.

Changes came in the weather. A day or two of calm was succeeded by a gale. Fiercer and fiercer grew the storm, until the bark was compelled to lie to. During this period the two ladies remained in their roomy cabin, and the captain kept his post on deck, defended from the rain by his macintosh and sou'-wester. The first mate busied himself watching the steady fall of the barometer, and the sailors, now altogether free from work, collected to smoke on the spars under lee of the longboat.

They were talking in an undertone about the captain. His conduct had excited their attention, and was puzzling them.

"Well, I can't think what it is he has got in the wind," observed the sail-maker. "He is quite a different man since last voyage."

"He has no rest," said another. "Day and night he's on deck, always pacing up and down, as if he were paid by the mile. And he eats no more than a bird—only keeps to his grog."

"Well, we may take some comfort in that," cried another. "That's always a good sign."

"I think," said the sail-maker, "he is vexed that he gave up his room to the women. He feels now like a lubberly passenger."

"'Taint that, I've knowed him do it afore," cried the boatswain, who had been a good while in the ship. "The skipper were always polite to'ard the ladies."

"Well, any way, he has got summat queer on him," returned the sail-maker. And this was the conclusion arrived at by all the men.

The calm gave place again to storm, necessitating constant attention to the ship. After a three days' severe gale the weather cleared, and the captain went below for rest. When he appeared again he was very stern and silent, speaking to none. The wind went round to the south-west, so as to be dead ahead, and the vessel had to take a northerly course.

But even the passengers could not help noticing that the captain was more changed from day to day. His face had assumed an unnatural whiteness, his eyes shone with a peculiar fire, and yet a rough word never crossed his lips. Kate Ellis herself had lost her fear of him, and

felt grieved that she had done him injustice. She now often came on deck alone, either to read or to watch the changeful play of the waves. He seldom spoke to her, and then only on indifferent subjects; but even on these occasions he usually broke off suddenly and went below, as though he were doing violence to himself in speaking at all.

It should have been mentioned that at this time the chief mate was sick. A violent fever seized him immediately after the close of the three days' gale, and he had been confined to his berth since. The captain and second mate shared the watches between them.

The Mary Burton, detained by the bad weather, had already been twenty-one days at sea; the passengers were beginning to get impatient, and wanted much to know of their whereabouts. But to inquiries on this point, the second mate, a young inexperienced seaman, could not give them an answer, and the captain apparently would not. There was only one expedient. Captain Powell had always shown himself so amiable towards the young lady—the only young lady on board—that it was thought if she were to ask him directly, he would not refuse her the information. Miss Ellis was strongly urged to make the attempt, and consented—she herself being anxious to know how soon they would reach their destination. When she came next morning on deck, and found the captain as usual pacing the starboard side of the quarter-deck, she went up to him with a pleasant smile.

"How is it, Captain Powell?" she asked. "Shall we soon see land? Or is there yet no hope of it?"

"Are you already tired of us?" returned the captain, a melancholy expression on his drawn-in lips. "Are you in need of anything?"

"Certainly not," replied Kate. "You have cared for us so well, that we can scarcely miss our usual land comforts so much as you do yours. But yet—"

"But notwithstanding, you want to leave the poor ship as soon as possible?"

"You won't blame a passenger for that," said Kate, smiling. "Salt water is not our element; I am afraid even of those little waves when I think how soon they may grow into fearful giants."

But the question remained unsatisfied, for the captain did not answer it. Miss Ellis ventured to ask again.

"Whereabouts are we now, captain? I hope it is no secret. Please tell us—for we land-folk understand nothing ourselves. One wave looks just like another: and to me the stars seem to stand in just the same places as they did in New York."

"You know I would do all in my power to please you, but I cannot alter the wind, and it is dead ahead," said the captain then. "You must resign yourself to put up with our ship's fare a little longer. I cannot help it, Miss Kate."

"But in what direction are we sailing now?"

"Up to the north."

"Then we shall come into the Polar Sea. When I was a child I always had a longing to visit those regions where in summer the sun never sets. It must seem very wonderful. Have you been there, Captain Powell?"

"Yes," answered Powell, casting his eyes dreamily around. "Wonderful indeed that endless day, where there are no nights—no dreadful nights. I wish I were there—and *you with me*," he added, in a scarcely audible whisper.

Kate Ellis was startled. The last words had not escaped her quick ears.

"Kate," said he, suddenly seizing the girl's hand, "answer me one question. You wished just now to know where we are; let me first hear from you where *I* am, and whether there is the smallest hope left for me that a fair breeze will again fill my sails and blow me into port?"

"I do not understand you, Captain Powell," said Kate, trying to take her hand away. But he would not let her; he continued to hold it while he spoke, his voice hoarse with agitation.

"Do not evade me longer—not now, at least—and be assured from this moment I will not disturb you with a single word. Tell me only this one thing—is it really true that you are now hastening to the arms of a *bridegroom*? Your mother says it is. Is it true that he is waiting impatiently for you in England?—that this ship is bearing you to him?"

For a moment Kate Ellis's face was white as his. And then she rallied her courage to avow the simple truth, deeming that it might put an end to the trouble for once and all.

"It is quite true, Captain Powell. I am soon to be married to Mr. Otterson: I think you know him. You were told this in New York."

"But I could not *believe* it," he answered with strange emotion. "I—I could not think that I stood at the gates of Heaven only to see them closed against me."

"Captain Powell!"

He flung away her hand, and looked at her. She looked back at him. Trembling though she was with dismay, she did not shrink from what she had said.

"It is well, Miss Ellis," said he, calmly drawing his pea-coat closer about him, as though he felt cold. "I thank you, at least, that you have been straightforward with me. I shall keep my promise. I will not trouble you with any further questions."

"And will you now answer me?" she yet gained courage to say. "When shall we reach our destination?"

"Soon, Miss Ellis—soon. You will see I shall not delay. I can't control the winds, you know: but—I am in a hurry myself—leave it to me."

With his eyes fixed on her, he raised his oilskin hat and went below.

There was something very strange about him : Kate could but see it. In half an hour, during which time he had brooded over his chart, he was on deck again and gave orders to set the top-gallant sails.

This was soon done. But the Mary Burton could not keep the same course with her upper sails set. She now stood exactly north-north-east.

Some of the passengers noticed the change, and supposed it indicated that the captain, having been driven too much to the south, was about to take the channel round the north instead of the south of Ireland. This hypothesis caused great joy among the passengers, and several bottles of wine were brought from private stores to celebrate the occasion. But the commander was gloomier than before, and would take no part in the conviviality.

The second mate shook his head over this new course ; it was not at all clear to him. But he was an ignorant fellow, as was already said, and careless as well. The chief mate remained very ill.

As the days went on, the wind became more and more favourable. They might now have sailed due east, but the yards were squared, and the bark still held her northerly course. One of the passengers, an American land agent, had some experience in navigation, having once taken charge of a coasting schooner from Boston to New Orleans. After a while, he became exceedingly dissatisfied with this continued progress towards the north, which brought them no nearer their destination. One night he noticed the pole star higher in the heavens than he had ever seen it before. The nights also began to be extremely cold. They must have already gone far north. The matter began to look suspicious. He did not understand the captain : but it was time that something should be done.

The next day when it was the captain's watch on deck, he went stealthily to the mate's berth. The chief officer had now recovered consciousness, and the fever was gone : but he was very weak.

"A word in confidence, Mr. Mate," began the American. "Do you know in what latitude we are?"

"No ; I've lost my reckoning," was the feeble answer. "How's her head?"

"North-north-east, yards almost squared, and studding sails to leeward."

"Then we must be sailing along the Irish coast, and through the North Channel."

"But this is the eleventh day we have kept this course."

"The eleventh day!" cried the astonished sailor, excitement enabling him to leap out of his berth.

"There is something wrong with the captain ; I'm sure of it," whispered the passenger, anxiously. "Take no notice. Be on deck at noon, and see that you get an observation."

The mate was very weak, but he crept out to the second mate to get his log-book ; and learned that the captain had kept it since the illness of the first officer. This was not quite regular. He went to the captain's room, but the door was locked and the key gone.

At noon the sun was perfectly clear ; and the mate, taking his sextant, got on deck, and posted himself on the fore-castle. The captain did not notice him but took his own observations from the quarter-deck, and then, giving the order to strike eight bells, went below. The mate went below also ; and while he was making out his reckoning the cook came to him.

" I am glad to see you on your legs again, sir," he said in a low tone. " I don't know where we are going ; but this is certain—we shall soon see some grizzly bears. And we shall need them for provisions, for ours are nearly gone."

" What are the crew saying about it ? " questioned the officer.

" They say I must make tight the old bread casks ; they will be wanted for blubber, since Captain Powell is certainly going a whaling," was the cook's answer : and he quietly stole away again. The mate finished his reckoning, and then consulted his chart.

A short while, and the captain was pacing the deck again. The mate came on. He looked at the compass, at the studding-sails, and then approached the captain, speaking in a whisper.

" For heaven's sake, Captain Powell, where are we sailing to ? "

" Don't give yourself any trouble," was the cool reply : " the bark is in good hands. We went too far to the south."

" But to-day at noon we were in sixty-four degrees north latitude, and this evening we must pass the line of the North Cape in Iceland. Where is it you are going, sir ? "

" Mr. Metsam," said the captain, coldly, " I have the management of this vessel. I beg you will not trouble yourself with things that do not concern you."

" But, Captain Powell, I must trouble myself : our supplies are running short. Remember, we carry passengers, sir, and must keep our time in Liverpool."

" Let me advise you to go back to your berth," was the command.

" I take the responsibility of the navigation. Do you understand."

" What is our longitude, Captain Powell ? "

" Leave the reckoning to me, till you are perfectly well, Mr. Metsam. You are not yourself yet."

The mate noticed the altered appearance of his superior, and saw that *he* was not himself. What to do he did not know : he was bitterly perplexed. Too much prostrated by sickness to act energetically—perhaps to *think* so, he let things be, believing there was no immediate cause for action. It is a serious thing to interfere with the commander of a vessel.

The wind went round more to the south, but the bark held the same course, now with studding-sails on both sides. The crew were getting dissatisfied. They had no objection to a long voyage; it increased their pay; but they had no desire for a trip to the Arctic regions without suitable clothing, or apparatus for taking seals. Once more the mate entreated the captain to put the ship about; but the latter threatened to order him into irons.

The passengers became seriously alarmed. A suspicion came upon them for the first time, that Captain Powell was insane. A deputation went to the first officer, and delivered over to him the charge of the vessel.

Mr. Metsam went on deck, and assured himself that the time for action had come. He ordered the crew aft, and inquired if they were willing to obey him.

"Sir," said the carpenter, speaking for the rest, "it is high time you took the command. There are icebergs ahead."

"Well, then, my men, in with the studding sails."

The crew went to work with a will; very rapidly the ship was put about so that she headed S. S. E. by East. But the tacking caused loud stir and noise, and Captain Powell rushed on deck.

"Who ordered the ship about?" he asked in a hoarse voice.

Mr. Metsam answered at once in a calm tone, hoping to soothe him. He felt convinced of his madness.

"I did, sir—without troubling you. There were icebergs ahead: and we have nothing to do in sixty-nine degrees north latitude."

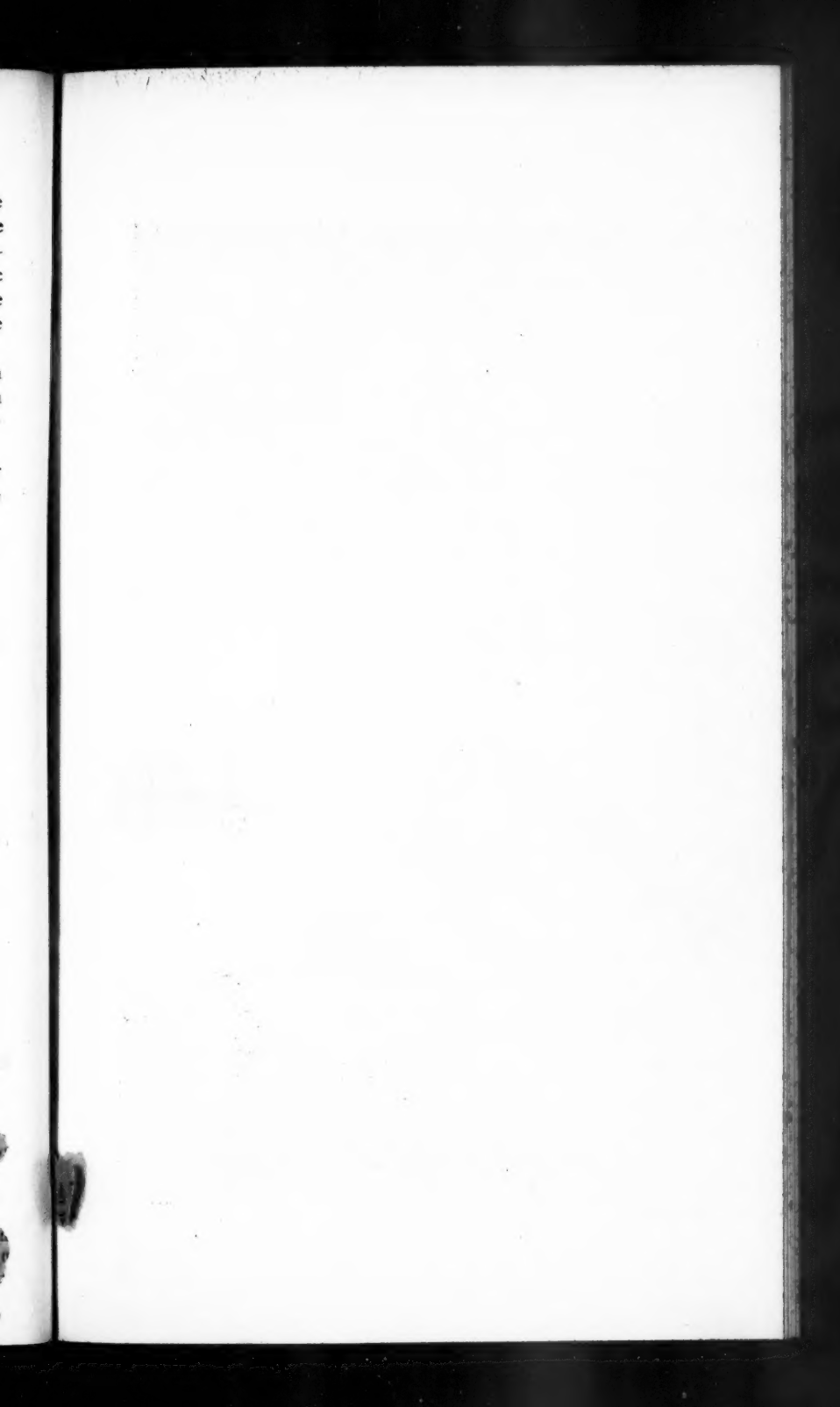
This brought the climax. "Rebellion! Mutiny!" hissed the poor madman: and, drawing a pistol from his pocket, fired it off. The mate felt a sharp pain in his side, and Captain Powell was overpowered.

Fortunately the wound was not a serious one: and Mr. Metsam was able to take full charge of the ship. Their position was near the coast of Greenland. Captain Powell had steered direct for the Polar Seas.

The next day a strong north wind set in, which drove the icebergs to the south. But the good ship ran before the wind: and nine days later they sighted the Faroe Islands. From this point they had a long voyage, and were detained by a violent storm on the Scotch coast.

Finally, after a run of sixty-two days in all, provisions and water all gone, they reached Liverpool in safety, where the ship had been given up for lost. Miss Ellis found her lover, shortly to be her husband, waiting for her; and all on board were thankful to have come no worse off.

Captain Powell never recovered his sanity. His passionate love for the young lady, combined with his rejection, acting on a not well-balanced mind, had indeed driven him mad. He died in an asylum not long afterwards. And when the good ship sailed out of port again, Mr. Metsam was in command.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

EDMUND EVANS.

OVER THE PICTURE BOOK.